

A CONSIDERATION OF THE ART FAIR AS CURATORIAL PLATFORM

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PAULETTE BRIEN: A consideration of the art fair as curatorial platform

Abstract

This thesis documents the introduction and impact of the curatorial role into contemporary art fairs. Set within a time-line of contemporary art fair evolution from 1967 until the present day, I describe how the introduction of the curatorial role has followed two particular paths. Using this distinction I generate two classifications of contemporary art fair, 'curated' and 'non-curated' to structure my communication of the divergent impacts of the curatorial role on the contemporary art fair model and on the wider art world infrastructure in which art fairs sit. On the one hand, in non-curated art fairs we see how the role of the curator is defined by specific curator-led sections that have expanded the size and scope of the contemporary art fair, while on the other, in curated art fairs, the role of the curator and the tenets of exhibition-making have sought to re-evaluate this expansion by bringing forward redefined operational models. With a particular focus on the latter of these two categories, I contend that as a result of the curatorial decisions made, the curated art fair creates distance between the event and its status as an art fair and between the art work and its status as an object for sale. In doing so this thesis argues that curated art fairs challenge the oft-cited notion that art fairs are only about money not art via an exploration of sociologist Viviana Zelizer's 'hostile worlds' theory and its application in the work of economic sociologists Olav Velthuis and Erica Coslor.

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Introduction

Beginning with the launch of *Kunstmarkt Köln* in 1967 widely considered to be the blueprint for art fairs today such as *Art Basel*, *FIAC*, *Frieze* and *The Armory* and closing with examples of more recently occurring art fairs such as, *VOLTA*, *Independent*, *Sunday* and *Sluice*, this thesis documents the emergence of the art fair model over the last forty-eight years. More specifically, this thesis charts the evolution of the art fair as a curatorial platform, evidencing the introduction and impact of the curatorial role within art fairs during this period. Through this introduction we see how the conventions of exhibition-making have expanded the discursive and cultural function of art fairs. Art fair visitors are now routinely provided with talks and discussion programmes, specially commissioned art works as well as on and off-site exhibitions and events; activity which sees the art fair increasingly become a place not only to purchase, but a place to view, discuss, debate and determine art. As we will see, in this model the role of the curator occupies programmes of activity that run in parallel and as a complement to the sales function of the fair. For the purposes of this thesis these are classified as non-curated art fairs so as to distinguish them from the second classification of art fairs used here, that of curated art fairs.¹

With a particular focus on the last ten years within which the idea of the curated art fair has gained currency, I will illustrate how a shift in the positioning of the

¹ See Barragán, Paco, *The Art Fair Age*, Milan, Charta, 2008, p. 39. Barragán introduces the term 'curated art fair' to describe the increasing tendency to invite curators to undertake content production roles within art fairs. In this thesis the term 'curated art fair' is used more specifically to describe one of two classifications of art fairs that are used throughout, those of curated and non-curated art fairs. In the context of my study therefore, the term, 'curated art fair' is used more specifically to describe a type of art fair as opposed to Barragán's usage of the term to describe a more general condition of curators working in art fairs.

curatorial role within the art fair has taken place. In the curated art fair model we see how the curatorial role and the act of curating have moved from the periphery to the centre; with the curatorial role being considered instrumental to an art fair's conception and delivery as a whole. Here we see art fairs become part exhibition / part art fair. Through the curatorial decisions made, this thesis argues that within curated art fairs distance is created between the art work and its status as an object for sale as well as distance between the event and its function as a site for sales. In creating this distance, I suggest that curated art fairs 'deal properly' with the relationship between money and art.² In doing so I argue that curated art fairs counter the oft-cited argument that 'Art Fairs Are About Money Not Art'³ by enabling art's artistic qualities and symbolic function to take precedence over its financial.⁴ Based on my experience of visiting non-curated art fairs such as *ARCO*, *The Armory*, *Art Basel* (Basel, Miami), *FIAC* and *Frieze*, this effect of creating distance between the art object and its 'for sale' status, occurs on a section by section basis within the art fair, or on a case by case basis as a result of the curatorial decisions undertaken by each gallery on their booth. In the curated art fair I argue that to a greater and lesser degree, this is a condition of the art fair as a whole.

As described in Pierre Bourdieu's *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art*

² Coslor, E. (2010) Hostile Worlds and Questionable Speculation Recognising the Plurality of views about art the market *Research in Economic Anthropology* p.219 30 *Economic Action in Theory and Practice : Anthropological Investigations*, Edited by Donald C. Wood, published by Emerald Books pp209-224.

³ saatchigallofficial, (2010) *Saatchi Gallery Debate: Art Fairs Are About Money Not Art*, [Online video] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7lvnPwsXMho>

⁴ Coslor, E. (2010) Hostile Worlds and Questionable Speculation Recognising the Plurality of views about art the market, p.219 *Research in Economic Anthropology* 30 *Economic Action in Theory and Practice : Anthropological Investigations*, Edited by Donald C. Wood, published by Emerald Books pp209-224.

and Literature, symbolic value describes value that goes beyond that which can be measured in economic terms. As Isabelle Graw describes,

It is the expression of an elusive charge derived from a range of factors:
singularity, art historical verdict, artist's reputation, promise of originality,
prospect of duration, claim to autonomy, intellectual acumen.⁵

However, this reading of the art fair as a site for the consideration and contemplation of art's artistic and symbolic qualities is routinely rejected by those who see art fairs as fundamentally detrimental to the experience of art. In her 2005 book, *The Purchase of Intimacy*, Viviana Zelizer coins the term 'hostile worlds' to describe the viewpoint held by some, that there are certain things which we believe should be kept out of the market place due to their incommensurable qualities.⁶ For Zelizer it is the analysis of the interplay between intimate relationships and economic interest that provides the context for her origination of the term. In the work of economic sociologists Olav Velthuis and Erica Coslor however, 'hostile worlds' is appropriated to the context of the study of art in the market place. It is used here to describe the position occupied by those that believe that the art market's role of equating art with money fundamentally corrupts its ability to communicate its intangible qualities. As Velthuis describes, this view considers that the 'unique value of art is trivialized by pricing it' and as such proponents of 'hostile worlds' have 'dichotomized price and [the] cultural value of

⁵ Graw, I (2009) *High Price: Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture*, Berlin: Sternberg Press p.28

⁶ Zelizer, V.A, (2009) *The Purchase of Intimacy*, Princeton NJ :Princeton University Press, p.20

art’.⁷ The art fair as a site where the relationship between art and its monetary value is manifest is routinely criticised as part of this argument.

As a place of art market transaction, this thesis argues that when active in the art fair, art works are simultaneously displaying both their symbolic *and* their market value. More specifically, with their emphasis of the symbolic *over* the financial value of art, it is my contention that the emergence of the curated art fair has created an art fair site where ‘hostile worlds’ theory is untenable and where a pluralistic view of arts value in the art fair is being achieved.

In addition to presenting a survey of the proliferation of art fairs which has led, in the words of some commentators, to ‘*The Art Fair Age*’ and a survey of the expansion and increased importance of the curatorial role within them, this thesis also looks at some of the impacts and challenges of these developments to the wider art world infrastructure in which art fairs sit.⁸ By profiling some of the activity that is taking place to counter these effects, I seek not only to illustrate how the art fair is a responsive and reactive theoretical and economic model, but also to consider how future art fairs may be constituted.

Using a methodology comprising of formal interviews and a reflexive practice that moves between participant observation and observant participation, I began the field research with event-based observation at art-fairs. These events have provided the opportunity for me to undertake participant observation as well as enabling me to

⁷ Velthuis, O. (2003) Symbolic meanings of prices: *Constructing the value of contemporary art in Amsterdam and New York galleries*, *Theory and Society*, 32, Netherlands, Kluwer Academic Publishers pp,181-215 [Accessed 10.09.15] http://www.aacorn.net/members_all/velthuis_olav/pricemeaning.pdf

⁸ Barragán’s P (2008), *The Art Fair Age*, Milan, Charta p.5

undertake an inventory of the key characteristics of my two classifications of art fair that I use within this thesis, that of curated and non-curated art fair.⁹

Over the course of my study, I have attended over 30 relevant events including art fairs, conferences, seminars and debates. In addition due to the fact that I am co-director of The International 3, a contemporary art gallery that is engaged in the art market, I have throughout the currency of my research also been taking part in curated and non-curated art-fairs as an exhibitor. Through this role I have been able to access the field of study at participant as well as at observer level. Over the course of this study The International 3 has participated in 16 art fairs that have taken place in Basel, Cologne, Manchester, Miami, London and New York. Additionally, annually since 2010, The International 3 has also been instrumental in the development and delivery of a curated art fair in Manchester called *The Manchester Contemporary*. This role sees The International 3 charged with researching, selecting and inviting the exhibitors who take part, designing the art fair layout, as well as determining how within press and publicity the mission of the art fair is described and positioned within a national and international context. The International 3's role as curatorial coordinator has therefore, enabled me to be part of an ongoing conversation as to how to constitute a curated contemporary art fair. Along with The International 3's participation in art fairs, my role with *The Manchester Contemporary* has meant that I have been instrumental in

⁹ In the definitions devised for this thesis, 'curated art fairs' are those where curators are part of the decision making systems of who exhibits in the fair, how the fair is spatially designed and how the presentation of the art works is considered. In 'non-curated art-fairs', where present, the curatorial role is assigned to specific curated sections of the fair such as special commissions, talks and events programmes. Non-curated art-fairs also retain rather than reject, the dominant art-fair architecture of individual wall-defined booths within a grid-like layout, something that is re-evaluated in the curated art fair model.

making and defining the context for my research and have been able to access the field at a level provided only to insiders.

Undertaking 'reflection in action and reflection on action', I have been able to provide a first-hand perspective of the areas for consideration.¹⁰ 'Reflection in action' has taken the form of the many in the moment observations, spontaneous conversations and subsequent actions, which took place during the process of my participation in and during the delivery of curated art fairs.¹¹ 'Reflection on action', resulted in a series of descriptive and analytical notes based on my deep field work experience and the post event conversations undertaken with colleagues.¹²

In order to mitigate my own selection bias and to obtain a degree of objectivity, I ensured that the research process also comprised a series of case-study interviews. These took place with a group of individuals who had been identified within existing research as key voices in the study of curated / non-curated art fairs. These semi-structured sessions covered a sequence of themes yet their flexibility allowed for participants' personal accounts. A thorough review of existing secondary data on the subject of the curatorial role within art fairs and the wider context within which they sit was also undertaken as part of this mitigation process.

The following curated art fairs: *Sunday* (London), *Independent* (New York), *VOLTA* (Basel / New York) and *Sluice* (London) were addressed by these interviews. These art fairs, often described as 'satellite fairs', take place in relation to the larger

¹⁰ Schön, D. A. (1987) Teaching artistry through reflection-in-action. *Educating the reflective practitioner*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers. pp. 22-40

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

non-curated art fairs such as *Art Basel*, *Frieze* and *The Armory*, that occur at the same time in the same city. Various positioning themselves as a complement, alternative or an opposition, satellite fairs benefit from the increased footfall and press profile that the larger fairs brings. These larger fairs also provide a wider context within which satellite fairs can differentiate and define themselves. Just as non-curated art fairs have proliferated, so too have the satellite fairs which have evolved not only as a response to the larger art fairs, but also as a response to each other.

While there are other art fairs in existence such as *Liste* (Basel) that fit within my classification of curated art fair and could have been added to this list, the case study art fairs presented here have been chosen for their particular significance to specific areas of my study.¹³ *VOLTA* (Basel), is considered to be one of the first art fairs to introduce curators onto its exhibitor selection panels while *Sunday* was the first and is the longest running art fair to take an 'open-space' approach to its use of presentation spaces.¹⁴ *Independent* in New York follows *Sunday* in terms of an historical time-line and is also one of the main proponents of an open-space format. *Independent* is also interesting for the fact that it has continued to evolve and expand its art fair operations over the course of my study with new projects and new geographic locations. Like *Sunday* and *Independent*, *Sluice* also takes an open-space

¹³ *Liste* is an art fair that takes place annually in Basel, Switzerland at the same time as *Art Basel*. It was started in 1996 as an initiative by a group of emerging galleries. It describes itself on its website, www.liste.ch as dedicated to 'new galleries and primarily to young art.' It takes place in the former Warsteck Brewery building with galleries occupying the Brewery's previously used rooms. The participants' selection committee includes a number of museum representatives.

¹⁴ An 'open-space' approach refers in this thesis refers to those art fairs that have addressed the established art fair design of white walled booths set out along avenues. Open-space art fairs reimagine the spaces in which galleries present their work often removing some if not all of the partition walls between individual presentations.

approach but also as a fair describes itself as artist-led. Considering its role as being to support non-profit and non-commercial entities distinguishes *Sluice* from *VOLTA*, *Sunday* and *Independent* who while open to non-profit and non-commercial organisations have not made this part of the core value of their fairs. Like *VOLTA*, *Sunday* and *Independent*, *Sluice* has also approached the art fair model as something to be addressed and reformulated to its specific needs.

To support these observations, secondary data has come from the various publications and articles, both printed and online that are identified in the section, 'Writing on art fairs' and in the attached bibliography. Whilst the majority of these resources have not dealt specifically with the arena of the curated art fair they have provided an in depth study of the broader non-curated art fair / art market landscape in which curated art fairs sit. They have also provided evidence to support some of the key observations made by this thesis, such as the expansion of the art fair as curatorial platform, the art fair as a site of provenance making and the art fair as a site where the boundaries between the artistic and commercial objectives are blurring. These sources have also raised issues, as this thesis does, regarding the perceived negative impacts of the expansion of the art fair on the wider art world infrastructure in which they sit.

As the research documents show, the art market is a 'highly differentiated and multi-dimensional' arena.¹⁵ As such it is necessary at the outset to define the context, scope and terms of reference within which this study sits.¹⁶ Chapter One begins therefore by identifying the typology of art fairs that provide the general context for

¹⁵ Graw, I. (2009) *High Price Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture*, Berlin, Sternberg Press, p.11

¹⁶ Ibid.

this study as well as clarifying the specific characteristics of the two classifications, curated and non-curated art fair, that I have generated for the purpose of this discussion. As an examination of the curatorial role in art fairs sits at the core of my research, Chapter One also presents key voices within existing research on the relationship between curators and art fairs to identify the theoretical framework through which these interventions are being read. By proposing that through the introduction of the role of the curator, curated art fairs offer a platform for the creation of value above and beyond the financial, Chapter One also presents key voices concerning the relationship between curatorial practice and value creation. In proposing that the introduction of the curatorial role into curated art fairs is enabling them to challenge 'hostile worlds' theory, Chapter One also positions this thesis within the oft-cited discussion that the art fair, as a site of commodification, reduces art's power to communicate its intangible values.

In order to illustrate the incremental introduction and expansion of non-curated art fairs, Chapter Two comprises a survey along an historical time-line from 1967 to 2004. This Chapter identifies on a case by case basis the originators of the art fairs, their organising structures and their spatial approach, as well as indicating where the curatorial role is located. In doing so, this Chapter identifies the key characteristics of what this thesis classifies as the non-curated art fair. Chapter Two spans thirty four years of art fair activity and in doing so shows the gradual progression of, and examines some of the motivations for, the growth of the art fair as curatorial platform. Within the time-line 1967-2004 there are other art fairs such as *Art Brussels* and *Shanghai Art Fair* that have appeared as well as ones that have disappeared such as *Art Chicago* that could also have been included. However, the art fairs covered in Chapter Two have

been chosen because they provide specific examples of and evidence for the argument of the expansion of the art fair as curatorial platform. The art fairs cited in Chapter Two therefore, can be read specifically but also read as examples of a type of expanded art fair that employs curatorial considerations to develop the art fair's discursive function. The cut-off point of 2004 also means that art fairs such as *Art Beijing* (2005), *Contemporary Istanbul* (2005), *India Art Fair* (2008), *Art Dubai* (2009) and *Art Rio* (2009), that all occur after this date are not included. Once again, this date has been selected with regard to a specific line of enquiry. As described earlier, 2004 marks the beginnings of the emergence of the curated art fair. As can be seen by the ongoing proliferation of non-curated art fairs after 2004, rather than signalling an end-date for the emergence of non-curated art fairs, the use of this date merely represents a shift in the focus of my study.

Using the results of interviews with four individuals variously involved in the case study curated art fairs listed above, Chapter Three provides further evidence of the ongoing transformation of the art fair model. The examples presented here illustrate how over the last eleven years a shift in the relationship of the curatorial role and the act of curating within the art fair has taken place. In doing so, I register a move from parallel programming to a position at the heart of the conception and delivery of art fairs.

Taking 2004 and the emergence of *VOLTA* (Basel) as the starting point for the diversifying of the relationship between curated and non-curated art fairs, this section of the survey provides case study examples of *VOLTA* (Basel and New York), *Independent* (New York, 2010), *Sunday* (London, 2010) and *Sluice* (London, 2011). On a

case by case basis I examine the motivations behind the inception of these art fairs, the methods by which they select participants, their use of contextualising online and published materials as well as their approach to spatial design. This is then combined with my personal experience of visiting these curated art fairs as well as in the case of *VOLTA* (Basel, New York), my experience of participating in them as a gallery exhibitor. Through this research I develop a reading of the curated art fair as a site where the privileging of the presentation of art creates distance between it and its status as an object for sale, and distance between the event and its status as a place of trade.

Chapter Three continues by offering a deeper analysis of the motivations for and impacts of the emergence of curated art fairs and the ongoing introduction and development of non-curated art fairs. Here practical drivers such as, meeting the growing demand of an ever increasing globalised audience for contemporary art, meeting the need of an increasing number of curators emerging from curatorial courses, along with a growth in the ever increasing artist and gallery numbers, are registered. Additional considerations such as the need for art fairs to differentiate themselves from one another in a competitive market place are also noted. Softer drivers such as the desire to better the conditions of presenting and viewing art, the desire for the art fair to more fully represent the breadth of practices that the art world encompasses and the desire to expose and remedy the perceived negative hierarchy of relationships that exist between artist, gallery and buyer are also discussed.

Referencing issues such as the decline in the gallery as sales model¹⁷ and the

¹⁷ McAndrew, C. (2011), *The Global Art Market in 2010 Crisis and Recovery*, Netherlands, The European Fine Art Foundation (TEFAF), [Online], p.49
www.tefaf.com/media/tefafmedia/tefaf%202011%20art%20market%20report.pdf

'gallery system is structurally weak'¹⁸ Chapter Four turns to an examination of some of the perceived negative impacts of the expansion and diversification of the art fair model. The increasing number of purchasing opportunities provided by the increasing number of physical art fairs is compounded by the emergence of online initiatives such as virtual art fairs and online sales platforms. This proliferation of the number of sales opportunities is considered to be taking focus away from the gallery as a site for sales. The increased importance of the art fair as a site of provenance making is also playing a part. Once considered the role of the gallery, museum or critic to confer critical value on the art works displayed, art fairs with their increased curatorial input now also play a part in determining the critical value of the artists and artworks that they show. The fact that art fairs are attracting curators of international significance to their advisory and decision making teams, the fact that art fairs are now routinely reviewed by printed and online publications, the fact that art works are given their debut within art fairs prior to gallery or museum exhibition and the fact that well regarded public collections and private collectors purchase from them, all point to the role that art fairs play in the sanctioning of artists and artworks. Chapter Four concludes however, by suggesting that after almost fifty years of continued growth we may now be seeing the signs of a retraction and refocusing of both curated and non-curated art fairs.

While the original curated art fairs such as *VOLTA*, *Sunday*, *Independent* and *Sluice* continue to exist we have not witnessed any new art fairs emerge in the last 2-3

¹⁸ Burns, C. (2011), Gallery system is structurally weak, *The Art Newspaper*, [Online] 226 July / August <http://theartnewspaper.com/articles/Gallery-system-is-structurally-weak/24188>

years under the curated art fair banner. What we are now beginning to see instead is a shift within non-curated art fairs which are increasingly demonstrating some of the characteristics of curated art fairs. Evidenced by the movement of curators from parallel programming to main gallery sections of art fairs and the adopting of more open-space architectural formats, non-curated art fairs appear to be expanding onto territory occupied by curated art fairs. However, other decisions made by non-curated art fairs such as *Frieze*, *Art Basel* and *ARCO* also suggest a redrawing of the relationship between the art fair and its audiences. All three of these art fairs have recently reduced their number of public entry days while increasing their professional and VIP points of access, suggesting a refocusing on the art fairs function as a site for sales, as opposed to its role as a cultural platform. With only a couple of examples to call on, it is too early yet to see whether or not this is a new phase of development for the art fair model, one that is based on retraction rather than expansion.

By presenting very recent examples of new activity that is just starting to emerge elsewhere within the art fair landscape, activity which is seeking to valorise new methods of exchange between artist and audience, I conclude this thesis by suggesting that what we may now be witnessing is the beginnings of a new typology - one that is still continuing to re-evaluate the art fair format, while also considering its validity as a model altogether.

Chapter 1: Terms of reference

1.i Art fair definitions

An art fair is a time-limited event that takes place either physically or in the case of more recent examples, virtually. Here artworks are presented and made available for sale by a range of producers and their representatives, (artists and galleries), to a range of consumers, (curators, artists, collectors, critics, general public). Art fairs have a multiplicity of foci in terms of the types of art works on display and the types of audiences that attend them. Within the spectrum of events self-defined as art fairs we find a plethora of opportunities to purchase anything from the output of amateur art groups within church halls to room sized installations by Turner Prize winning artists at *Art Basel*. What we see in this breadth is evidence of multiple art worlds and the art markets that service them all operating simultaneously, supporting a variety of artists and their consumers. For the purposes of this study therefore it is necessary to define the type of art fairs and by consequence the area of the art world under discussion here.

The subject of this thesis is the contemporary art fair i.e. those art fairs that give a platform to the presentation and sale of contemporary art.¹⁹ In this context, contemporary art is in the first instance defined as the creative output of artists living now. However, in order to identify the particular contemporary art fairs that sit within the scope of my study as opposed to those that do not, a second level of definition of

¹⁹ Some of the fairs under discussion in this thesis such as *Art Basel* and *The Armory* include sections within their art fairs for the presentation and sale of art determined as Modern as well as that determined as Contemporary. In using the term contemporary art fair in these instances, I am referring to fact that (though not exclusively), these art fairs do give a platform for the sale of contemporary art.

contemporary art is also required. In amongst the myriad of art fairs that self-define as contemporary art fairs it is those that give a platform to *critically engaged* contemporary art that provide my context.

Critically engaged contemporary art is produced by artists who are considered to be producing art that is made within the context of a critical understanding of and response to art history. These are artists whose practice and products are perceived as making or have the potential to make a relevant contribution to the ongoing discussion of contemporary art as a medium. These are artists about whom a consensus of opinion is being generated by academics, critics, curators, other artists and collectors who consider their work,

to be sufficiently relevant to the current discourse in contemporary visual theory and history of art to secure what it is called subscription.²⁰

Described in more detail later, *subscription* refers to the process by which certain artists and artworks are deemed to be critically engaged whilst others are not. As described by Morris Hargreaves, McIntyre in their report, '*Taste Buds: How to cultivate the art market*',

Subscription is the process by which art is filtered and legitimised. In an otherwise unregulated sector, where anyone can proclaim themselves an artist and anything be held up as 'art', the selection of 'the wheat from the chaff' is carried out by artists' peers. Networks of art world professionals, including academics, curators, dealers, critics, artists and buyers, provide advocacy and

²⁰ Hobson, P (2012), *Art & Money* presentation, SVA (Stroud Valley Arts), Stroud, 22nd May

endorsement for an artist's work through exhibitions, critical appraisal and private and public purchases. The value of an artist's work increases in direct proportion to the subscription it attracts and sustains.²¹

The evidence of an artist's critical relevance is shown therefore by the fact that they are regularly curated into exhibitions, written about by critics and acquired by museums and private collectors as representative examples of the contemporary art of today. They are also artists who are being shortlisted for and are winning prizes and who are being sought after by galleries that want to sell their work. Taking the UK as an example context, the perceived critical relevance of an artist could be demonstrated by their coverage in magazines such as *Art Monthly* and *Frieze* which consider themselves to be, 'UK's leading magazine of contemporary visual art'²² and the 'leading magazine of contemporary art and culture' respectively.²³ They could be being shortlisted for and winning prizes such as The Turner Prize which was set up to 'celebrate new developments in contemporary art'²⁴ for artists under 40 years of age, while at the other end of the spectrum they could be being selected for early career exhibition opportunities such as New Contemporaries, which is, 'a critical platform for new and

²¹ Morris, Hargreaves, McIntyre, (2004) *Taste Buds How to cultivate the art market*, Arts Council England.[Online] p.4
http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/documents/publications/tastebudssummary_php7xDjDe.pdf

²² Art Monthly (no date), *About, Art Monthly* [Online] [Accessed 28th September 2015]
<http://www.artmonthly.co.uk/magazine/site/about>

²³ Frieze (no date), *About frieze FAQ's* [Online] [Accessed 28th September 2015]
<http://www.frieze.com/about/>

²⁴ Tate (no date), *What is the Turner Prize?* [Online] [Accessed 28th September 2015]
<http://www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-britain/turner-prize/what-it-is>

recent fine art graduates'.²⁵ These are artists who could be being acquired by collections such as Arts Council Collection, which is the 'largest national loan collection of modern and contemporary British Art'²⁶ or by the network of collection based public sector museums and galleries that are charged with including in their collections representative examples of the contemporary art being made today. In terms of UK art fairs, their work could be being seen in *Frieze*, *Sunday, Sluice*, or *The Manchester Contemporary* all of which consider themselves charged with the responsibility of showing the best of critically engaged contemporary art today.

This is obviously not a comprehensive picture of all of the actors and organisations who are considered as playing their part in validating an artist and their career. Rather, in the definition of critical engagement in use in this thesis these represent *some* of the indicators of an artists' critical relevance that my definition would acknowledge. These examples also serve to illustrate some of the specific constituent parts of the area of the art world / art market under discussion here.

Once the filter of critically engaged contemporary art has been applied to the 180²⁷ to 220+²⁸ art fairs that are recognised world-wide, we arrive at a much lower

²⁵ New Contemporaries (no date) *What we do* [Online] [Accessed 28th September 2015] <http://www.newcontemporaries.org.uk/>

²⁶ Arts Council Collection (no date) *Home* [Online] [Accessed 28th September 2015] <http://www.artscouncilcollection.org.uk/>

²⁷ Daniel, D (2015) *40 Percent of World Gallery Art Sales Made at Fairs and Other Key Findings in the TEFAF Art Market Report 2015*, artnet news [Online] 12th March 2015 [Accessed 12th September 2015] <https://news.artnet.com/market/5-key-findings-from-tefaf-report-2015-276301>

²⁸ Edward Winkleman quoted by E. Kinsella (2014) *Are Art Fairs Good for Galleries – Or Killing Them?* . artnet news [Online] 31st March 2014 <http://news.artnet.com/market/are-art-fairs-good-for-galleries-or-killing-them-28920/>

number of art fairs that fit within the scope of my study. As the frequently published 'Top Ten Lists' and the many art market voices that have provided the secondary data for this study illustrate, a consensus of opinion regularly falls upon the same ten to fifteen contemporary art fairs as being the most important of this critically engaged type.²⁹ While the specific composition of each list may vary, *Art Basel*, which has art fairs in Basel, Miami and Hong Kong, *Frieze* which has art fairs in London and New York, *The Armory* (New York), *ARCO* (Madrid) and *FIAC* (Paris) regularly occupy the top slots.

As audience figures from the 2015 TEFAF (The European Fine Art Foundation) report shows, *Art Basel* and *Frieze* represent some of those with the highest attendance.³⁰ The perceived importance of these art fairs is therefore being measured in part by their level of audience appeal.³¹ However, as the *Artnews.net* article, 'Which International Art Fairs Have the Highest Attendance?' shows, we see a number of other art fairs listed with equally high, or even higher audience figures yet they rank

²⁹ Forbes A, Milliard C (2014), *Europe's 10 Best Art Fairs* artnet news [Online] 29th December 2014, [Accessed 11th September 2014] <https://news.artnet.com/market/europes-10-best-art-fairs-in-2014-197412> . Mason, S, (2014) *World's 10 Best Art Fairs*, September 11th 2014 Fodor's Travel [Online] [Accessed 11th September 2015] <http://www.fodors.com/news/photos/worlds-10-best-art-fairs#13-frieze-london>, Kirkpatrick, R, (2015), *The 5 Best Art Fairs in the World*, Oyster [Online] 28th July 2015 [Accessed 11th September 2015] <http://www.oyster.co.uk/articles/47734-the-5-best-art-fairs-in-the-world/>

³⁰ The European Fine Art Foundation (TEFAF) is the organiser of an art fair known as *The Maastricht Fair*. *The Maastricht Fair* gives a platform to the presentation and sale of Old Masters and antique works of art, Jewellery, 20th Century Design, works on paper as well as what the fair describes on its website About section as 'Classical Modern and Contemporary art, Photographs'. As an organisation TEFAF also produce an annual art market report which provides insights into how the art market is performing. See more at www.tefaf.com

³¹ Daniel, D (2015) *40 Percent of World Gallery Art Sales Made at Fairs and Other Key Findings in the TEFAF Art Market Report 2015*, artnet news [Online] 12th March 2015 [Accessed 12th September 2015] <https://news.artnet.com/market/5-key-findings-from-tefaf-report-2015-276301>

lower than *Art Basel* and *Frieze*.³² In addition to their high ranking with regard to audiences and sales figures therefore, the importance of fairs such as *Art Basel* (Basel, Hong Kong, Miami), *Frieze* (London, New York), *FIAC* (Paris), *The Armory*, (New York) and *ARCO* (Madrid) is also being measured by other metrics, that of their quality and prestige. Quality in this instance is measured by the quality of exhibitors that the art fair is able to attract and by consequence the quality of the artists and artworks that are shown. The quality of the artists and exhibitors is defined in this context by the level of impact that they are seen to be having on the contemporary art world and by the relevance they are seen to have for curators, collectors and critics. Relevance is evidenced through the level of visibility these artists and exhibitors have within current exhibition programmes, within public and private collections, within press and publicity. Quality exhibitors and quality artists in turn attract quality curators, collectors and critics that are interested in these artists from a purchase, programming and profile raising perspective. The outcome of the combined activity of these actors therefore signals a perceived level of relevance and importance of the art fair and is, as Don Thompson states,

...what economists call a virtuous circle or network effect; it leads to a self-perpetuating oligopoly among a few top fairs.³³

³² The Editors of ARTnews (2015) *Which International Art Fairs Have the Highest Attendance ?* ARTnews [Online] ARTnews 28th February 2015 [Accessed 11th September 2015] <http://www.artnews.com/2015/02/28/which-international-art-fairs-have-the-largest-attendance/>

³³ Thompson,D, (2012) *The 12\$ Million Stuffed Shark, The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art*, Great Britain, Aurum Press. P.187

The art fairs under discussion in this thesis therefore can be categorised as contemporary art fairs that present critically engaged contemporary art and are considered to be the most important of their type based on an analysis of their popularity, quality, relevance and prestige. However, as a means to further define the specific scope of my study and to structure the evidence accrued, I have arrived at two further classifications of critically engaged contemporary art fair. Defined as non-curated and curated art fairs, qualification for either of these categories is determined by how the curatorial role is employed and enacted within them.

1.ii Classification of non-curated and curated art fairs

Non-curated art fairs	Curated art fairs
Curators / curatorial role engages in specific sections of the art fair	Curators / curatorial role engages across the art fair as a whole
Exhibitor selection committees comprise of peer-group commercial galleries	Exhibitor selection committees include curators / curatorial role
Adoption of existing spatial layout models such as white walled exhibitor booths along multiple avenues	Examination of existing spatial layout models leading to open space art fairs and exhibitor spaces built around specific needs of artworks

Fig 1: Table showing how the distinctions are made between 'curated' and 'non-curated' art fairs in the context of this thesis

Table 1 above shows how I have categorised art fairs in this study as either curated or non-curated. This is based on my analysis on the multiple factors listed above i.e.: how the curatorial role is manifested within them, how they manage the selection of exhibitors and how they approach the spatial design of their art fairs. This is not a fixed list however and some movement does occur between definitions, for e.g. not all 'curated' art fairs adopt an 'open-space' policy. Instead these distinctions are to be read as general rather than rigid rules.

Taking non-curated art fairs first, the role of the curator has traditionally been to act upon discrete sections developing programmes that run in parallel to those sections of the art fair where galleries occupy sales booths. Secondly with regard to how they manage the selection of exhibitors to occupy the sales booths at these fairs, common to all of these examples is the fact that their selection committees comprise representatives from commercial galleries. Thirdly, with regard to their spatial designs all of these examples have adopted the standard layout for art fairs of white walled booths along avenues in a grid-like formation. As will be seen in Chapter Three, along with a reconfiguration of selection committees, this spatial layout, which has remained a standard for art fairs since the inception of the first contemporary art fair in 1967, is contested in the curated art fair models that appear post 2004. Finally common to all of these examples is the fact that they were all conceived initially by groups of commercial galleries that came together to support their own and their peer-group's art market development. Taking all four of these factors into consideration *Art Basel*, *Frieze*, *ARCO*, *FIAC* and *The Armory* for example, are defined within this thesis as non-curated art fairs. However, as described in point one, all of these fairs do have sections of their fair that are curated and while falling under the jurisdiction of the art fair's

main organising body, these sections are the responsibility of individual freelance, employed or groups of curators who are brought in specifically to undertake this work. *Art Basel's* (Basel), *Unlimited* section for example, is curated by New York based curator Gianni Jetzer and is described on *Art Basel's* website as,

Art Basel's pioneering exhibition platform for projects that transcend the classical art-show stand, including massive sculpture and paintings, video projections, large-scale installations, and live performances.³⁴

Unlimited takes place in addition to other curated sections of the fair such as the talks programme *Art Basel Conversations* and *Parcours*, a programme of publicly sited art works and performances presented off-site in Basel. Similarly, each year *Frieze* (London, New York) presents a programme artists' commissions, film, music and talks all framed under the heading *Frieze Projects*. Curated in 2014 by curator Nicola Lees, formerly Senior Curator of Public Programmes at the Serpentine Gallery in London, *Frieze Projects* is funded and presented by *Frieze Foundation* which is *Frieze's* separate non-profit organisation. *ARCO* art fair in Madrid similarly charges its foundation, the *ARCO Foundation*, with the role of funding and organising its curated sections of the art fair such as, *#SoloProjects*, *Talks and Conferences* and *Walk with Curators*. *The Armory Show* (New York) in 2015 had two *Special Projects* sections as part of its art fair, one section was curated by independent curator Omar Kholeif while the other was curated by Lynn Gumpert & Michèle Wong from New York University's *Grey Art Gallery*. As the first part of Chapter Two will illustrate, at the outset of their conception, in addition to

³⁴ ArtBasel (2015), *The Show* [Online] [Accessed 2nd August 2015] <https://www.artbasel.com/basel/the-show>

the sales booth, art fairs presented additional programmes that were modest in scale and scope. However as the second part of Chapter Two shows, in the intervening period, the curated sections of non-curated art fairs have increased significantly with this expanded art fair model now being seen as default.

With regard to the second classification that I am using, that of curated art fairs, as outlined above these art fairs are a much more recent addition to the art fair landscape and began emerging in 2004. As Chapter Three will show in the intervening period of eleven years, I recognise at least twelve art fairs that have appeared that fit into my classification of curated art fair. However as Chapter Three will also show only a small number of these art fairs are still in existence.

Firstly, unlike non-curated art fairs, curated art fairs are those that have been conceived by curators, have appointed curators to their organising bodies or have adopted a curatorial approach in devising and delivering their contemporary art fairs from the outset. As shown by my case study examples, *VOLTA* (Basel), was co-conceived by curator and critic Amanda Coulson and has employed freelance curators such as Christian Viveros-Fauné to join its exhibitors' selection committee. *Sluice* was conceived by artist and curator Karl England and art historian Ben Street. *Sunday* and *Independent* while each being conceived by a consortia of commercial galleries both have curators as part of their exhibitor selection processes. In the case of *Independent*, curator Matthew Higgs has occupied the role of creative advisor and curator Rob Tufnell has undertaken the role of Director for *Sunday*. Secondly, as exemplified by *Sluice*, *Independent* and *Sunday*, all three of these art fairs have adopted an open-space approach to their design. This means that as part of their conception and

delivery these art fairs have re-evaluated the spatial layout used by the non-curated art fairs mentioned above. Rather than adopting a generic format, curated art fairs talk of generating display models that are sensitive to the specific needs of the art works on display and to the economic position of galleries.

As the title of thesis suggests it is an examination of how and why the curatorial role has expanded the art fair that sits at the core of my study. Therefore in addition to clarifying the types of art fairs under discussion and where the curatorial role sits in my classifications of curated and non-curated art fairs, it is also necessary to examine *how* curating is taking place in order to reveal the theoretical frameworks through which this work is being done.

1.iii Curator as cuckoo

Coming from the Latin words 'to care for', the history of the profession of curator finds its origins within the civil service of Ancient Rome where the task of the *curatores* was to 'look after, keep track of, and protect cultural property'.³⁵ In more contemporary usage, curator describes the staff role undertaken within a museum in relation to an institution's collection, a role that includes the cataloguing, conservation and custodianship of the works in their charge. As a term it is also used to reference work undertaken in non-collection based galleries where, common to both, is an understanding of the role of the curator as interpreter who recognises, mediates and communicates the stories that art tells us about ourselves and the world. In this

³⁵ Rutledge, S (2012) *Ancient Rome as a Museum : Power Identity, and the Culture of Collecting*, Oxford :University Press, p.308

context the curatorial role acts an extension of a particular museum or gallery remit. Through the bringing together of art and audiences, the role of the curator acts as a catalyst creating opportunities for questions to be asked and dialogues begun between art works and audience. Within the context of exhibition display, through a process of curatorial interpretation and audience reinterpretation, the artistic, aesthetic, cultural, social and political values of the work are both described and ascribed.

Over the last 40 years however, we have seen the emergence and proliferation of a new use and definition of the curatorial role in the form of the independent curator, as well as other labels such as, artist-curator and producer-curator which have come into use. Self-defined by their choice of contexts within which to work and without the concern of a specific collection or particular institution, these new roles instigate and respond to artists, artworks and contexts according to their own agenda. As I heard curator David Thorp recently say, 'I'm an independent curator. I'm like a cuckoo looking for somewhere to lay my eggs.'³⁶

Documenting the history of the role of independent curating is considered a relatively new phenomena. Talking in the September 2011 edition of Frieze magazine, Alex Farquharson says,

I remember when you could fit all the books and journals on curating on a single shelf; now they would fill half a wall³⁷

³⁶ Thorp, D (2014) ReMIX launch speech at Bury Art Museum, Bury 5th September 2014

³⁷ Farquharson, A (2011), *Look & Learn*, Frieze Magazine 141 [Online]
<http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/look-learn/>

It is an argument also registered by Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson, whose 2008 ICA Blog contribution. 'Curatorial discourse and the contested trope of emergence', charts the history of writing on the subject back to publications such as *Thinking About Exhibitions* (Ferguson, Greenberg, Nairne 1996) and Michael Brenson's, 'The Curator's Moment – Trends in the Field of International Contemporary Art Exhibitions', *Art Journal*, 57: 4, (Winter, 1998), with later publications such as Hans Ulrich Obrist's, *A Brief History of Curating, Everything you Always Wanted to Know About Curating and Ways of Curating*, published in 2009, 2011 and 2014 respectively, also considered key. Regularly reported in these writings is the departure of Swiss curator Harald Szeemann's from his position at Kunsthalle Bern in 1969, as the perceived starting point for the profession of the independent curator. In moving away from the institution and its collections towards a peripatetic existence, Szeemann, as Iain Irving writes in *Independent Art Curating*,

made his history with When Attitudes Become Form, changing the way we experience an exhibition and how artists and curators make them.³⁸

Defining his role as an 'Ausstellungsmacher, a maker of exhibitions',³⁹ Szeemann was, as Hans-Ulrich Obrist states,

³⁸ Irving, I., (2013). *Curating as practice and profession: an exploration and definition of a contemporary independent curator*. OpenAIR@RGU. [Online] <http://openair.rgu.ac.uk>

³⁹ Obrist, H.U. (1996) *Mind over Matter*. interview with Harald Szeemann 1/11/96 *Artforum International* [Online] <http://umintermediai501.blogspot.co.uk/2008/01/mind-over-matter-interview-with-harald.html>

...more conjurer than curator - simultaneously archivist, conservator, art handler, press officer, accountant and above all, accomplice of the artists.⁴⁰

Szeemann's connoting and occupying of the term 'exhibition maker', provides a clear distinction from the previous understanding of the curatorial role in relation to the conservation and communication of an institution's collection. Szeemann's approach to the development of exhibitions has influenced a generation of highly prolific curators who, in following his lead, have marked out for themselves a broad arena within which to work. Moving between Biennials such as Venice, Sao Paulo and Sydney, between large scale international exhibitions such as *Documenta* and *Manifesta*, to one off projects and events, the role of the independent curator has expanded across contexts and continents. It is with the emergence of the first of the contemporary art fairs, whose history is articulated in Chapter Two, that we begin to see independent curators starting to apply their activity to the context of the art fair. Indeed, as Ximena Apisdorf Soto says, even Szeeman himself is reported to have recognised art fairs as, 'places of creation'.⁴¹

Since its emergence in the late 1960's independent curatorial practice has developed along many different lines. Through the work of curators such as Paul O'Neill we have seen how the role of the curator as singular 'arbiter of taste or as grand auteur',⁴² is broken down in favour of a curatorial approach based on

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Soto, X A, (2010), *The Role of Curators Hired by Art Fairs*, MA, Sotheby's [Online] http://www.academia.edu/649234/The_role_of_the_curators_hired_by_art_fairs

⁴² O'Neill, P (2009) *The Politics of the Small Act*, [On Curating] [Online] Issue 4 http://www.on-curating.org/files/oc/dateiverwaltung/old%20Issues/ONCURATING_Issue4.pdf

‘collaborative processual structures’.⁴³ Through the work of curators such as Maria Lind we are made aware of ‘relational’ or ‘performative’ curating, where the work of the curator is to incorporate viewers themselves into the process of exhibition making and delivery, while Hans Ulrich Obrist talks of his work as being, a ‘catalyst – and sparring partner’.⁴⁴ It is with the emergence of the curatorial approach that has come to be known as New Institutionalism however, that we can best read how the curatorial role is being applied within art fairs.

Borrowed from economics and sociology, New Institutionalism is a term that was, as Luice Kolb and Gabriel Flückiger state, ‘...introduced by Jonas Ekeberg in the homonymous first issue of the publication-series *Verksted*, published by the Office for Contemporary Art Norway in 2003.’⁴⁵ Within this publication, New Institutionalism is used to describe an approach to curating that has the redefinition of the contemporary art institution as its focus. Seeking to change the hierarchies, structures and functions of institutions, New Institutionalism aimed at developing institutions that were, ‘part community center [sic], part laboratory and part academy’.⁴⁶ As an approach it demands self-reflexivity in order to critique adopted modes of operation, asking institutions to reconsider their role and function not just in the art world, but more broadly within society. New Institutionalism asks institutions to review their

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Obrist, H.U (2014), *Hans Ulrich Obrist: the art of curation* The Guardian [Online] <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/mar/23/hans-ulrich-obrist-art-curator>

⁴⁵ Kolb, L, Flückiger G (2014), *New Institutionalism Revisited*, *Oncurating.org* Issue 21 Kolb L, Flückiger G (eds), [Online] <http://www.on-curating.org/index.php/issue-21-reader/new-institutionalism-revisited.html#.Vg-Ygyu5vIU>

⁴⁶ Esche C (2004) *What's the Point of Art Centres Anyway? -Possibility, Art and Democratic Deviance*. Republic Art.[Online] http://republicart.net/disc/institution/esche01_en.htm

motivations for and use of the existing modes of exhibition programming and seeks to dismantle the presumption of the 'exhibition' as the main mechanism for information sharing and meaning-making.

In his interview for Oncurating.org curator Paul O'Neill makes a link between the tenets of New Institutionalism and the contemporary condition of art fairs,

Even art fairs are institutions which have become very smart, so therefore in order to encapsulate some of the self-reflexivity, art fairs commission new projects, hold talks, commission critical publications, do something site-responsive or location responsive.⁴⁷

This application of the curatorial role to generate the discursive function of the art fair is also recognised by curator and writer, Paco Barragán who in his book, *The Art Fair Age*, uses the term New Fairism as a way to describe how aspects of New Institutionalism are being applied by curators to the art fair context. In this book, New Fairism is used to describe the approach being undertaken by curators within art fairs who are generating,

a new way of understanding and reformulating the function of the fair as an institution and artistic structure. How can we make it so that the art fair will be part market, part meeting point, part laboratory, part pedagogical workshop and part curatorial platform?⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Neill, P *Interview with Paul O'Neill*, Oncurating.org [Online] Issue 22 <http://www.oncurating.org/index.php/issue-22-43/interview-with-paul-oneill.html#.VDKaGbStoxd>

⁴⁸ Barragán, P, (2008), *The Art Fair Age*, Milan, Charta, p. 48

Recognising that this thesis is focused within the context of the art fair landscape as opposed to the public gallery or museum, Barragán's term New Fairism is therefore considered a more appropriate and context sensitive way in which to describe the framework through which curators are active within art fairs.

As the evidence in the following chapters will show, both non-curated and curated art fairs have gradually increased the number and range of opportunities for self-reflexivity and self-critique. Within non-curated art fairs these opportunities range from programmes of specially commissioned art works, talks, debates and symposia that sit in special sections of the art fair. As some of the rationale for the development of these curated sections within non-curated art fairs shows, reference is often made to their purpose as being to provide opportunities for artists to critique the art fair itself. One such example can be seen in the comments of Neville Wakefield (former *Frieze Projects* curator) who in an interview for *The Art Newspaper*, talks of one of the remits of the commissioned projects at *Frieze* as being, 'throwing sand in the Vaseline of commercial art?',⁴⁹ continuing the argument in an interview for the Deutsche Bank website when he says,

...that it [Frieze] offers a platform for artists to make work that engages with various aspects of the fair – the market, the situation, the mode of display and so on.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Wakefield N (2007) *Throwing sand in the Vaseline of commercial art The new curator of Frieze projects explains his commissions* *The Art Newspaper / Frieze Art Daily* [Online] 10th October 2007, [Accessed 14th September 2015] <http://old.theartnewspaper.com/fairs%5CFrieze%5C2007%5C1.pdf>

⁵⁰ Wakefield, N (2010) *Frieze Goes YouTube An Interview with Frieze Projects Curator Neville Wakefield* *DB Artmag* [Online] [Accessed 8th July 2015] <http://www.db-artmag.com/en/51/feature/frieze-goes-youtube---an-interview-with-frieze-projects-curator-/>

As an approach it is carried through by Sarah McCrory who occupied the position of *Frieze Projects* curator from 2010 to 2012, and who says, 'my role was to work with exciting and interesting artists who took the fair as a starting point.'⁵¹

In non-curated art fairs therefore, New Fairism as an approach is exercised by curators with regard to specific sections of the art fair. In curated art fairs however, rather than being restricted to specific sections of the art fair, New Fairism is a more embedded and overarching approach. As the interviews and my analysis of the case study examples will show, the dismantling of the existing framework of the non-curated art fair to bring forward a new operational model, is at the very heart of the inception and delivery of these art fairs.

The desire to create space for the content and context of the art fair to be critiqued and re-evaluated can therefore be seen as one of the motivators behind the introduction of curators into both non-curated and curated art fairs. As evidence in Chapter Two and Chapter Three will show however, as an approach it is employed to a greater or lesser degree depending on the specific circumstances of each art fair.

With the emergence of the curatorial approach New Institutionalism occurring in 2003 and the emergence of the first of the curated art fairs in 2004, it is perhaps both timely and inevitable therefore that the two would find each other and in doing so provide curators with another nest in which to lay their eggs.

⁵¹ McCrory, S (2014), *Clashing Desires* Francesesco. G (ed) *Fairland, explorations, insights and outlooks on the future of art fairs*, Koenig Books & Mousse Publishing, pp91-105 p.97

1.iv Curators and value creation

In addition to being employed to advance the discursive function of the non-curated art fair, or in the case of the curated art fair, to bring into being new models of art fair operation, why else are we witnessing an increase in the presence of the curatorial role within art fairs? Additional motivations lie in the recognition of the *value* that curators are seen to bring to bear on art, artists and events. This thesis argues therefore, that through the introduction of the curatorial role and its embodied value, both non-curated and curated art fairs benefit from the cultural capital and critical value that curators can bring. In doing so, the art fair as a place where this value is enacted and exchanged becomes part of the value-making paradigm, able to confer prestige and provenance on artists, artworks and the art fair itself.

As described earlier, the consideration that through the work of the curator critical value is ascribed to artists and art works is defined by Morris, Hargreaves, McIntyre as the 'subscription process'.⁵² Describing the journey an artist and their art works take from early career exposure to public collection acquisition, 'subscription' recognises that along the way a series of 'gatekeepers' and 'stakeholders', who, by interacting with the artist and their art work, add to its critical value and provenance.⁵³ Starting with peer group advocacy within artist-led exhibitions,

⁵² Morris, Hargreaves, McIntyre, (2004) *Taste Buds How to cultivate the art market* Arts Council England.[Online]
http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/documents/publications/tastebudssummary_php7xDjDe.pdf

⁵³ Provenance is the life story of the art work. The quality of its provenance is measured by the quality of interactions that are had with the work; be that curators who select the work for exhibition, press who write about the work or collectors who own the work. As it passes from hand to hand, the art work is considered to accrue value and the more significant the interactions the more value is accrued. Documented along the way, provenance is a way to prove the authenticity of the art work.

shortlisting and winning prizes, through to gallery representation and ultimately public gallery curatorial attention and museum acquisition, 'subscription' describes a sequence of interrelated actions by a series of interrelated actors. The combined effect of this process sees the artist / artwork deemed as being of critical value and consequently seen as providing a relevant contribution to the development of contemporary art as a medium. In the 'subscription journey' described here, the acquisition of their art works into public gallery collections is considered as one of the means by which an artists' relevance is ultimately measured. Once acquired, both the artist and their artworks in effect become part of art history as the public collection remit is that the work will be held, catalogued and conserved for ever more as a representative example of an artwork of its time.

In making this statement I am conscious however that this is only one of the 'journeys' that artists might take. The ambition of museum acquisition is not the only success indicator or measure of achievement for all artists. Indeed as the recent publication, *Validation beyond the gallery* (2015) notes, there are many artists working within a number of other art world contexts for which other metrics are important.⁵⁴ However whilst their processual structures, contexts of working and measures of achievement will differ, the notion of obtaining forms of validation from participants, peers and clients is still important as the means by which artists obtain personal

⁵⁴ Ravetz, A and Wright, L, (2015), *Validation beyond the gallery: How do artists working outside of the gallery system receive validation of their practice?* Manchester Metropolitan University.
<http://www.art.mmu.ac.uk/staff/download/validation-beyond-the-gallery.pdf>

satisfaction, future opportunities, visibility and prestige. Indeed as can be seen from this report, the word *validation* itself occupies a prominent position within the title.⁵⁵

The curator, as one of the art world actors considered to be instrumental in an artist's / artwork's subscription journey, exercises what Pierre Bourdieu in *The Forms of Capital* calls, their embodied social and cultural capital.⁵⁶ Accrued via a process of peer defined relevance based on a consideration of the impact of his / her curatorial activity upon contemporary art's current debates, the curator's expertise becomes an embodied form of value, a symbolic capital which conveys the prestige and recognition they engender. It is through this embodiment of knowledge, experience and influence and their exercising of their networks and relationships that the curator provides validation. By association therefore, the reputation of the curator acts upon value creation and the better the reputation of the curator, the more value the artist and the artwork accrues by mutual association.

The more frequent and meaningful these interactions, the better the artwork's provenance and the more credible it becomes.⁵⁷

As Olav Velthuis states, art is a 'credence good' whose value relies on

⁵⁵ Ravetz, A and Wright, L, (2015), *Validation beyond the gallery: How do artists working outside of the gallery system receive validation of their practice?* Manchester Metropolitan University. <http://www.art.mmu.ac.uk/staff/download/validation-beyond-the-gallery.pdf>

⁵⁶ See *The Forms of Capital* (1986) by Pierre Bourdieu. Here Bourdieu distinguishes between three types of capital: economic, social and cultural. While economic capital is that which is based on financial resources, social and cultural capital is accrued as a result of networks and relationships of influence (social) and education, knowledge and skills (cultural). Embodied refers to the condition that these types of capital (social and cultural) can be both consciously acquired or are passively received over time. Bourdieu also recognises capital to also occupy objectified (material objects) and institutionalised (academic / institutional recognition) states. [Online] <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm>

⁵⁷ Horowitz, N (2011) *Art of the deal: contemporary art in a global financial market*, Oxfordshire, Princeton University Press p.20

the collective evaluation of the experts involved in the collective evaluation processes that take place within the art world.⁵⁸

It is an understanding which Bourdieu similarly conveys when he speaks of the value of art as being sociologically constructed based on the 'production of belief'⁵⁹ and is echoed again by Schönfeld and Reinstaller in the *Journal of Cultural Economics* who state that ,

The critical distinction between art and other consumption goods is that the quality of an artwork cannot be objectively determined. Instead the value is socially constructed.⁶⁰

It is an equation that can be equally transferred to the site of the art fair where, the more influential the curator the more value will be attributed to the artworks and art fairs sections with which they engage. As an example of critical value accrual in action we need only look at Mike Nelson's 2007 nomination for the Turner Prize which was based in part on his site-specific immersive installation, *Mirror Infill* commissioned and presented by *Frieze Projects* in 2006.⁶¹

As a means to quantify the correlation between the work of intermediaries and

⁵⁸ Velthuis, O, (2011), *Art Markets*, Towse, R (ed) *A Handbook of Cultural Economics, Second Edition*, Cheltenham, UK, Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, pp.33-58 p.37

⁵⁹ Bourdieu, P (1980), (translated by Richard Nice), *The production of belief: contribution to an economy of symbolic goods, Media Culture and Society*. Issue 2 pp 261-293 [Online] [Accessed 02.10.15] <http://rel.as.ua.edu/pdf/rel430simmonsspr15bourdieu.pdf>

⁶⁰ Schönfeld, S, Reinstaller, A (2005) *The effects of gallery and artist reputation on prices in the primary market for art: a note*. Department of Economics Working Paper Series, 90. Inst. für Volkswirtschaftstheorie und -politik, WU Vienna University of Economics and Business, Vienna [Online] <http://epub.wu.ac.at/342/1/document.pdf>

⁶¹ More information about the specifics of this project can be found on the Frieze website here. http://www.friezeprojects.org/commissions/detail/mike_nelson/

their critical value, a number of published and more recent online platforms have appeared. In 1970 the German journalist Willi Bongard developed *Kunstkompass* which comprises of an annually published list of the top 100 artists as determined by their international reputation. Continuing to the present day, *Kunstkompass* is now joined by online platforms such as *ArtFacts.net* which also lists artists based on an analyses of their visibility and impact on the art world. *ArtFacts.net* presents an artist's exhibition history, their relationship to galleries and their presence in collections and from this extrapolates an art world rank, the rise and fall of which can be monitored via a graph provided as part of the *Artfacts.net Career Analyser* function. While *Kunstkompass* and *Artfacts.net* both extrapolate a position for an artist within a world-wide hierarchy of significance, sales figures do not form part of the mix. *ArtFacts.net* for example explains that

The aim of the *Artist Ranking* system is to arrange artists by their exhibition success. Exhibitions listed on *ArtFacts.Net*⁶² rate the different artists with a points system, which indicate the amount of attention each particular artist has received from art institutions.

Kunstkompass similarly uses exhibition attention as the material from which their rankings are made, clearly indicating that sales figures do not form part of the rubric.

The *Kunstkompass* is based on information sourced from 200 major international museums and institutions, the 120 most important group exhibitions worldwide (such as the Venice Biennial) as well as reviews and

⁶² ArtFacts.Net (2015) [Online] [Accessed 13th August 2015] http://www.artfacts.net/about_us_new/ and <http://www.artfacts.net/tour/artist-ranking/>

coverage in the international specialist press. Acquisitions by museum collections also play into the overall evaluation, auctions and sales results do not.⁶³

In deciding not to include sales figures as part of the material used to determine an artist's significance and relevance, both *Kunstkompass* and *ArtFacts.net* are choosing to create a separation between critical and market value and in doing so ensure that prices are not being used as an index of quality.

1.v Art fairs are About Money Not Art

The idea that art needs to be separated from its financial value, in order to retain artistic and symbolic value, is at the heart of the argument against art fairs as sites for viewing and appreciating the artistic and symbolic qualities of art. The view that the art fair has become part of the mechanism that confers provenance on artists and artworks is contested by those who consider that the curatorial expansion of the art fair to be no more than,

an aesthetic amuse bouche, a way for the fair to distinguish itself from the herd and to claim the cultural high ground.⁶⁴

Echoed in the title of the debate where this statement was made and referred to in the introduction, '*Art Fairs Are About Money Not Art*', this comment articulates a widely

⁶³ Blouin Art Info (2015), *Gerhard Richter Leads Kunstkompass Ranking for Top 100 International artists*, [Online] 25th March 2015, [Accessed 13th August 2015] <http://uk.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/1122475/gerhard-richter-leads-kunstkompass-ranking-for-top-100#>

⁶⁴ Buck, L (2010), saatchigallofficial, *Saatchi Gallery Debate: Art Fairs Are About Money Not Art*, [Online video] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7lvnPwsXMho>

held belief by artists and cultural commentators alike that art fairs are a place purely for financial transaction not artistic appreciation.⁶⁵ In the catalogue, *Frieze Art Fair Yearbook 2003-4* produced to accompany the inaugural edition of the fair, curator Polly Staple reports how art group Gelatin responded to the invitation to participate in *Frieze Projects* by saying, 'oh so you would like us to be the clowns'⁶⁶ while Lawrence Weiner is reported as saying, 'so you would like me to do the social work'.⁶⁷ As Staple continues she recognises the opinion held by some that such projects are seen to hint at 'ribbons and bells being brought in to dress up an otherwise hard faced commercial enterprise'.⁶⁸ Rather than being considered as significant curatorial contributions, what these comments reveal is a level of perception that sees such sections as an entertainment side-show providing relief and distraction from the art fair's money making intent. What is important to register here however, is that these comments come early in the evolution of the art fair as expanded curatorial platform. What can be seen later in this thesis, in the comments of the curators of more recent art fair curated sections, are examples of ambitious and embedded projects which take the condition of the art fair itself as their starting points.

As described in the introduction, economic sociologist Viviana Zelizer uses the term 'hostile worlds' to describe the theory, held by some, that there is a distinction between the goods and services we consider acceptable in the market place and those that we do not. It is an argument echoed by Lewis Hyde in his book *The Gift* which

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Gelatin quoted in Staple, P (2003)*Frieze Art Fair yearbook 2003-4* (2003), London, Frieze

⁶⁷ Weiner, L quoted in Staple, P (2003)*Frieze Art Fair yearbook 2003-4* (2003), London, Frieze

⁶⁸ Staple, P (2003)*Frieze Art Fair yearbook 2003-4* (2003), London, Frieze

considers that, '... it may be possible to destroy a work of art by converting it into a pure commodity.'⁶⁹ In sympathy with these arguments Robert Hughes in the BBC Documentary, 'The Mona Lisa Curse' says 'when art is so closely tied to the market something is lost'⁷⁰ going on to say at the close of the programme,

art should make us feel more clearly and intelligently. It should give us coherent sensations, which otherwise we would not have had....that is what market culture is killing.⁷¹

One reading of comments like those provided by Hyde and Hughes is that the market is conceived of as 'evil Other' and as an opinion, is considered to have its origins in the Renaissance.⁷²

In his working paper, *Artists and the Market: From Leonardo and Titian to Andy Warhol and Damien Hirst*, David Galenson charts the conditions from which this convention emerges. Defined as craftspeople in the Middle Ages, artists were paid fixed rates per day like any another manual labourer, however, as Galenson states, 'During the fifteenth century artists began to challenge this practice'.⁷³ By negotiating fees commensurate with their skill rather than hours worked, it is here that we see the

⁶⁹ Hyde, L.W (2007), *The Gift, How the Creative Spirit Transforms the World*, Great Britain, Cannongate Books p.xv

⁷⁰ Hughes, R (2008), BBC, *The Mona Lisa Curse* [Online]
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JANhr4n4bac>

⁷¹ Hughes, R (2008), BBC, *The Mona Lisa Curse* [Online]
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JANhr4n4bac>

⁷² Graw, I, (2009), *High Price, Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture*, Stenberg Press, p. 9

⁷³ Galenson, D (2007), *Artists and the Market: From Leonardo and to Andy Warhol and Damien Hirst*, Cambridge MA, National Bureau of Economic Research [Online]
<http://www.nber.org/papers/w13377.pdf>

beginnings of equating the practicing of art with financial reimbursement. As the economic position of artists begins to rise, so too does the idea of their newly found status. As Galenson's quote from the 15th century painter, Cennino Cennini reveals, 'Your life should always be regulated as if you were studying theology, philosophy or other sciences'.⁷⁴ It is at this time therefore, that the shift in the idea of artist as labourer to artist as intellectual takes place. The role of the artist as part of the everyday is replaced by the artist as occupier of a special place in society whose practice is 'a calling rather than a trade',⁷⁵ and as Douglas Davis states, the idea of art and the artist as 'above the world' emerges.⁷⁶ As Hans Abbing writes,

From the Renaissance onwards people became increasingly aware of their individuality. ...The public increasingly appreciated the artist's authenticity. It identified with the artist through his art work and symbolically shared in his individuality. So both artists and their public started to condemn artists that were commercial or who had 'lost their autonomy'.⁷⁷

This notion of the autonomy of the artist and the value of art in and of itself, *l'art pour l'art*, i.e. 'art for art's sake', is a viewpoint that gathers momentum throughout the 19th century. It is explored in the writings of Emmanuel Kant who,

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ Velthuis, O (2005), *Talking Prices The Symbolic Meaning of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art*, Princeton:Princeton University Press, p. 133

⁷⁷ Abbing, H. (2004). *The Autonomous Artist still Rules the World of Culture. A Portrait of the Artist in 2005. Artists Careers and Higher Arts Education in Europe*. I. Jansen. Amsterdam, Boekmanstudies p.55-66 [Online] <http://www.hansabbing.nl/DOCEconomist/Autonomous%20artist%20still%20rule%20-%20publicized%20version.pdf>

set art free from content, subject matter, the client's wishes, the community's desires and the needs of religion',⁷⁸

and gave rise in the UK to the Aesthetic Movement where art was to be regarded for its aesthetic values, 'associated to the notion of a higher principle'.⁷⁹

As a convention this position continues to impact on the perceptions of art and commerce to the present day and is at the heart of the criticism of the art fair as a site where the contamination of art by money is seen to take place. By turning art into a marketable good, a commodity, the art fair is considered to subject art to external value measurements based on monetary value which supersede and compromise its ability to communicate its inherent values as art, or its instrumental value as a tool of dissent.

As indicated in the introduction it is my contention however, that through the introduction and expansion of the curatorial role the curated art fair has become a site where the symbolic values of art are able to be appreciated and where the financial value of the art on display is subsumed. In non-curated art fairs this effect is delivered within the art fair's curated sections. In the curated art fair, however, due to their overarching curatorial considerations, I contend that the 'hostile worlds' theory of art and the market is untenable. In order to set this hypothesis into a wider context however, it is important to recognise some of the other voices that are dealing with the

⁷⁸ Willette, J. (2010), *Kant and Art for Art's Sake*, Art History Unstuffed 5th March 2010 [Online] [Accessed 26th August 2015] <http://www.arthistoryunstuffed.com/kant-art-for-arts-sake/>

⁷⁹ Graw, I, (2010), Vimeo, Global Art Forum_5, Art Dubai *High Price: Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture*, [Online] [Accessed 27th August 2015] <https://vimeo.com/33472517>

relationship between curators and art fairs and are communicating the impacts and implications of this introduction.

1.vi Writing on art fairs

Due to the nature of art fairs as cyclical, recurring events, much of the writing that exists on the subject is found within printed and online magazine and newspaper articles that emerge as the art fairs are taking place. From a publication perspective, the most relevant books I have found on the subject of the relationship of curators to art fairs are, Paco Barragán's *The Art Fair Age* and the more recent *Fairland*.

Set within a wider consideration of the condition of the contemporary art world and its markets, alongside chapters such as, *The Advent of Expanded Painting* and *Fun, Funds and Funky Brands*, Barragán dedicates two chapters specifically to an examination of the evolution of the contemporary art fair. Here Barragán recognises, as I have done, the incremental introduction of the curatorial role into art fairs which has seen them expand the remit of what I describe as non-curated art fairs. As described earlier, Barragán introduces the term New Fairism to describe the theoretical framework through which curators are active within art fairs even going so far as to list '10 Guidelines for a Curated Art Fair' as a way to illustrate what he sees as the key components of this approach.⁸⁰

In addition to introducing a critical approach to the selection and presentation of art in the art fair, Barragán also considers that the introduction of the curator is rooted in practical motivators such as 'positioning',

⁸⁰ Barragán's P (2008) *The Art Fair Age*, Milan, Charta p.57

The market is becoming more and more aggressive, and art fairs need a clear positioning in order to be able to remain in the collector's mind.⁸¹

It is an opinion which is expanded further in the chapter, '*The Curated Art Fair and the Art Fair Curator*', where Barragán states

we shouldn't be surprised that the curators' presence at art fairs is each time more overwhelming, given that it is becoming the differentiating element for making an art fair stand out among the mass of fair proposals.'⁸²

Here Barragán recognises how the introduction of curators may on the one hand be part of a theoretical and practical dismantling of an accepted model of art market operation, while on the other, also being part of an art fairs' marketing and differentiation strategy. As an extension of this marketing argument for the introduction of curators, Barragán also suggests that the increase in their presence could also be seen as part of art fairs acknowledging and engaging in the 'Experience Economy'. Written in 1999 by J.B. Pine II and J.H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy* suggests that experience is now the most valued economic offering where,

experience stagers must constantly refresh their experiences: change or add elements which keep the offering new, exciting and worth paying money to experience all over again.⁸³

Considered as the next stage of economic development after the agrarian, the

⁸¹ Ibid p.36

⁸² Ibid p.39

⁸³ J.B.Pine II and J.H.Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre & Every Business a Stage*, 1999, Harvard business School Press, Boston, p.95

industrial economy and the service economy, the experience economy describes how services themselves have now been commoditised with businesses now seeking to deliver experiential retail where, 'experiences are becoming the predominant economic offering'.⁸⁴ The expanded offer of today's non-curated art fairs not only includes complementary art related activities on-site such as talks and performances, they also extend the visitor experience beyond the art fair through their off-site food and drinks offers, through their tie-ins with specific partners such as hotels, restaurants and transport providers, as well as by offering specific and tailored VIP programmes. Seen as part of a package of visitor offers therefore, the curated sections of non-curated art fairs could indeed be read as part of a recognition of the experience economy and as a strategy to market the fair.

While Barragán recognises curatorial practice as a positive intervention into the art fair, he also suggests that the curatorial engagements he has witnessed to date, 'are still too shy and are limited to sections like Art Unlimited, ARCO Brazil, or some temporary annual exhibition'.⁸⁵ Published in 2008, Barragán's comments come at an early stage in the development of the art fair as expanded curatorial platform. These comments also come before the emergence of the many curated art fairs such as *Independent*, *Sunday* and *Sluice* that are covered in this thesis. As I will show, the ambition, volume and effect of curatorial engagement in art fairs has increased since the date of publication of *The Art Fair Age*. It is my contention therefore that what we

⁸⁴ Pine, J, (2004) TED, *What Customers Want*, [Online] [Accessed 29th June 2015] https://www.ted.com/talks/joseph_pine_on_what_consumers_want?language=en#t-802298

⁸⁵ Barragán's P (2008) *The Art Fair Age* Milan, Charta p.55

are now witnessing is a much more embedded and ambitious curatorial approach, particularly in relation to curated art fairs.

Fairland published in March 2014 focuses entirely on the arena of the contemporary art fair. Charting the same history of the emergence of the contemporary art fair from 1967 onwards, *Fairland* brings together a collection of voices to describe the current and to speculate on the future condition of art fairs. Along with *The Art Fair Age*, *Fairland* provides one of the key texts that I have found which considers the curatorial role in relation to the art fair format providing contributions from curators Sarah McCrory, (former *Frieze Projects* and *Film* curator and current Director of *Glasgow International*) and Pablo León de la Barra, (Guggenheim UBS MAP Curator for Latin America). Speaking from their personal experience of working within art fairs, McCrory and de la Barra uncover some of the challenges and opportunities of working within this context.

In describing the motivations behind the selection and delivery of their projects McCrory and de la Barra display an engaged curatorial approach that is questioning both the content and context of the art fair as site. With projects ranging from large scale performances incorporating amateur performers, a programme of food-related discussions and events and the creation of an imaginary open-air museum of contemporary art, both curators show how art fair curating can lead to ambitious projects that give a voice to a breadth of concerns.

...I can say that working as a curator on many of these projects gave me a chance to experience the freedom and possibility to develop experimental

ideas: something that, on the contrary, you aren't always allowed to do in institutions.⁸⁶

From seeking to 'clash conceptually with the fair', wanting to present the 'act of making', to engage in 'discussions around the city and rural' and to 'rethink the construction of different Brazilian and post-tropical modernist narratives', McCrory and de la Barra's projects provide good examples of how curatorial engagement within non-curated art fairs can provide a platform for the consideration of values above and beyond the financial.⁸⁷

By arguing that this pluralistic view of art's value within the market place is possible, I add to the research of key proponents in this area such as Erica Coslor and Olav Velthuis. Whilst neither of these writers explicitly cite the curated art fair as a context for their study, both have examined the wider world of the contemporary art fair within their research. Erica Coslor's chapter, 'Hostile Worlds and Questionable Speculation; Recognizing the Plurality of Views About Art and The Market', uses ethnographic research at international art fairs as part of the methodology. At the outset Coslor's chapter presents an introduction to the long held argument that money corrupts the meaning of art and how its commensuration is considered to devalue arts power to communicate its more 'intangible' qualities. Coslor's research outcomes

⁸⁶ Leon de la Barra, P (2014), *Oases of Freedom in the Desert of Commodities*, Garutti F (ed), Fairland, London, Koenig Books, pp 131-137. p. 136

⁸⁷ McCrory, S, (2014) *Clashing Desires*, Garutti. F (ed), Fairland, London Koenig Books, pp91-105 p. 92, 93
Leon de la Barra, P (2014), *Oases of Freedom in the Desert of Commodities*, Garutti F (ed), Fairland, London, Koenig Books, pp 131-137. p. 134

suggest however, that this is now considered to be too simplistic approach to the complex relationship between art and money within the marketplace. For

‘those in professional roles – artists, gallery directors, and curators- people who deal with the art market and the relationship between art and money in their everyday work’⁸⁸

Coslor finds that the ‘argument of art vs. money was less of a concern’⁸⁹ than she had expected, suggesting that as a debate which has been ‘discussed and problematized in the professional art world in earnest since the 1970's’ is now perceived as an outdated hypothesis.’⁹⁰ However, where her research demonstrates 'hostile worlds' views still to be held, in the relationship to art as investment for example, Coslor finds that rather than an ‘opposition to the market’,⁹¹ she finds that the concern was for dealing ‘properly’ with the relationship between art and money.⁹² Coslor then continues by illustrating some of the properties her research determines as constituting the 'proper' relationship between art and money. Coslor concludes that while she too considers ‘hostile worlds’ theory to be too simplistic an approach to the art vs. money debate, she believes that

⁸⁸ Erica Coslor, *Hostile Worlds and Questionable Speculation Recognising the Plurality of Views About Art and The Market* published in *Research in Economic Anthropology* Volume 30 *Economic Action in Theory and Practice : Anthropological Investigations*, Edited by Donald C. Wood, published by Emerald Books pp209-224 [Online] <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/book/10.1108/S0190-1281%282010%2930>

⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Ibid

the hostile worlds view shapes the way art is bought and sold. By ensuring that the cultural and aesthetic value of art remains distant from the price, art sellers are able to satisfy the many buyers who hold this view.⁹³

It is in this last phrase that evidence is found to complement my argument that in creating distance between the art work and its status as an object for sale and distance between the event as a place of trade, curated art fairs 'deal properly' with the relationship between money and art.

Velthuis like Coslor, argues that 'it is too simple to equate a work of art in a capitalist society with a commodity'.⁹⁴ In his book, *Talking Prices Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art*, through interviews and case studies, Velthuis presents a cogent argument that shows that it is the dense network of instrumental relationships within the art market that determine the price value of a work. By illustrating how the price value is symbolic of a dense network of interconnected activity by a variety of actors within the art world, described earlier as the 'subscription process', Velthuis argues that prices are socially constructed. This counters the view held by neoclassical economics that considers 'markets as autonomous, de-contextualized mechanisms... not disturbed by any social or cultural interference'.⁹⁵ This is a view which is echoed by the Marxist description of commodification, whereby economic and aesthetic or critical value cannot be reconciled. Velthuis demonstrates how the social construction of prices takes place

⁹³ Ibid

⁹⁴ Velthuis, O. (2005) *Talking Prices Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p.55

⁹⁵ Ibid p.9

through an analysis of the ways in which art works are presented, marketed and sold, highlighting the myriad relationships that exist such as those between artist and gallery, gallery and collector or artist and collector. Through an examination of the language and behaviours of these relationships, Velthuis concludes that prices are

not only about money, value in exchange, or monetary measurement....By listening to the way art dealers talk when they deal with prices and by observing what they do when they market art, I found that prices tell rich stories about the caring role which dealers want to enact about the identity of collectors, about the status of artists or the artistic value of art'.⁹⁶

My study of the mechanisms through which contemporary art is presented and purchased in the curated art fair therefore, seeks to add to Velthuis's assertion that 'the radical separation between quality or artistic value on the one hand, and price on the other, is in the end untenable'.⁹⁷

With regard to interpreting the dynamics of the art market, the production of value and the relationships and behaviours upon which this is predicated, there exists a number of other publications all published within close reference to the period of my study. From these I have chosen to highlight Sarah Thornton's, *Seven Days in the Art World* (2009) and Don Thompson's, *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark, The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art* (2012), as the most relevant. From a position of participating observer both publications unpack the infrastructure that constitutes the art market using ethnographic research, citing the art fair as part of an ecology that

⁹⁶ Ibid p.179

⁹⁷ Ibid p.178

includes secondary market actors such as auctions. While referencing art fairs throughout, both publications also have dedicated chapters for the subject. Thompson's *Art fairs, the final frontier*, and Thornton's *The Fair*, both locate their research within an examination of *Art Basel*. Through a combination of factual reporting and personal observation, Thompson and Thornton both provide evidence to support some of the observations made within my own research. My assertion that certain art fairs have now become part of the value accruing mechanism for art, artists and galleries is underlined by Thompson when he identifies,

there are four international fairs whose branding is such that they add provenance and value to contemporary art. They are to art what Cannes is to movie festivals.⁹⁸

As shown earlier, art fairs such as *Art Basel* and *Frieze* occupy these positions at the top of art fair lists due to the fact that they are able to provide validation to the artists and galleries that participate. As previously described top art fairs attract quality galleries and artists to participate who in turn attract quality curators, collectors and critics, the presence of which attracts quality galleries and artists to participate and so on, providing another example of the virtuous circle effect described earlier by Don Thompson. Selection committees who decide which galleries and artists participate are therefore seen to occupy powerful positions in determining not just the career trajectory of artists, but also the business success of galleries themselves. Thornton's relaying of the comments of one of the *Art Basel* selection committee members echoes

⁹⁸ Thompson, D (2012) *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art*. Aurum Press Ltd. p.188

my own observations of the prestige and therefore critical value that can be accrued by art fair participation,

The fair is significant from a prestige point of view. If a gallery is not admitted, people might think that it is not as important as another gallery that is. If a gallery is refused next year, it could destroy their business.⁹⁹

The key texts that I have identified above as most relevant regarding the subject of curatorial engagement within art fairs, have provided an overview of the broader theoretical and economic context within which this study sits. However, by drawing attention to the specific arena of the curated art fair this thesis aims not only to add to, but also to extend existing research.

⁹⁹ anonymous, Thornton, S (2009), *Seven Days in the Art World*, London, Granta Publications p.78

Chapter 2: From *Kunstmarkt Köln* to *Frieze* : establishing the characteristics of the non-curated art fair

As indicated in the introduction and in Chapter One, this thesis uses two classifications of art fair, non-curated and curated, as a means to distinguish between how the curatorial role is evidenced in and has impacted upon the development of the art fair model. Whilst Chapter Three presents a survey of the development of those art fairs deemed by this study to be curated art fairs, this Chapter is dedicated to examining on a case by case basis the incremental proliferation of the non-curated art fair, how the curatorial role is evidenced within them and some of the motivations behind and impacts of this introduction. As described earlier, this survey does not seek to be representative of a complete time-line of all art fairs that emerged from 1967 to 2004. Instead the art fairs listed here have been chosen for their specific relevance to areas of my study.

Whilst 1913 saw the large scale selling exhibition *The International Exhibition of Modern Art* take place in New York, it isn't until the post-war period after World War II, that the scene is set for the founding of what consensus of opinion considers as the first modern day art fair in the form of *Kunstmarkt Köln*.¹⁰⁰

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The *Exhibition of Modern Art* took place in 1913 in the 69th Regiment Armory building on Lexington Avenue from which it also gained the short-hand name, *The Armory*, (*The Armory* art fair launched in 1999 on the same site) *The Armory* (exhibition), presented over 1000 works by American and European artists. It was considered seminal for its introduction of the European avant-garde to American audiences. It was also considered to be a financial success with approximately 250 works being sold for a total value of around \$45,000 (\$100,000 as an equivalent today). As a large scale selling exhibition, *The International Exhibition of Modern Art* is important within the art fair development time-line representing a commercial platform to profile those artists considered to be the most relevant of the time. However from the archive of documentation relating to this project, while works were available for sale it was the exposition of these works that formed a key motivation. Don Thompson refers to it as 'The first twentieth century art fair', (Thompson D. 2008, *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark : curious economics of contemporary art*) and Stefano Baia Curioni, calls it '...a market: a place of education and a social event, but also with no ambiguity, a place for selling art works', (Curioni S B, (2014), *Fairland*, Garutti F (ed) London, Koenig Books) it is referenced here as a pre-cursor to rather than an example of an art fair.

As Finbarr Bermingham states, the outbreak of World War 1

was like somebody pressing the reset button on the rapidly internationalising world of trade... And while not everyone agrees on the exact date, most acknowledge that WWI radically changed the course of global trade for decades to come... It didn't return to its 1914 levels until the 1960s.¹⁰¹

Kunstmarkt Köln, now known as *Art Cologne*, was launched in 1967 by Cologne-based gallerists, Hein Stünke and Rudolf Zwirner and as Günter Herzog states in his writing for the *Art Cologne* website, it was sparked 'by the urgency of the need to put new life into the lacklustre art market in West Germany' in the post-war period.¹⁰² In explicitly calling it *Kunstmarkt* which translates to *art market* in German, there was no doubt from the outset as to its intended commercial purpose. Whilst being conceived by the two gallerists named above, in order for them to raise municipal funding for the launch of *Kunstmarkt Köln*, they were required to set up an organisation. As Herzog explains, along with Stünke and Zwirner, 16 other dealers founded the *Verein Progressiver Deutscher Kunsthandler, e.V. (VPDK)* [The Association of Progressive Art Dealers].¹⁰³ Together they produced an inaugural event which in terms of its spatial design and exhibitor selection procedures has provided a blueprint not only for those art fairs that immediately followed in its wake, but also for the majority of non-curated contemporary art fairs that exist today.

¹⁰¹ Bermingham, F (2014) International Business Times *WWI 100th Anniversary : How Global Trade Changed Forever* [Online] [Accessed 9th September 2015] <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/wwi-100th-anniversary-how-global-trade-changed-forever-1456773>

¹⁰² Herzog, G (no date), *Art Cologne, A history of the First Modern Art Fair* [Online] <http://www.artcologne.com/ART-COLOGNE/Trade-fair/History-of-ART-COLOGNE/index.php>

¹⁰³ Ibid

In its spatial layout, *Kunstmarkt Köln*, followed what Christine Mehring describes as a 'strip-mall' and was the result of visits made by one of its founders to antiquarian bookseller fairs.¹⁰⁴

Stünke had frequented Stuttgart's annual antiquarian fair. For him, it became the "prototype," and central elements of its design were adapted for the first KUNSTMARKT. For example, its ground plan was arranged like a strip mall (Ladenstrasse), as one critic had it, with temporary walls for the booths...¹⁰⁵

Comprising of booths created from temporary walls for each of the exhibitors this still exists as the dominant layout for the majority of today's contemporary art fairs. As outlined in the introduction and expanded on later in this chapter, this is one of the contested components within the re-examination of the art fair format that has been undertaken by curated art fairs.

As with its modern day counterparts, participation in *Kunstmarkt Köln* was not open just to any exhibitor that had the money to pay. Rather, participants were selected via a committee comprising of representatives from other commercial galleries which, as a process for exhibitor selection, is, along with the spatial layout, another area reconsidered by the curated art fair.

In 1970, three years after *Kunstmarkt Köln* was launched, we see the emergence of *Art Basel* in Basel, Switzerland. Once again a project established by

¹⁰⁴ Mehring, C, (2008), *Emerging Market :The Birth of the Contemporary Art Fair*, first published in ArtForum International, published on The Free Library
<http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Emerging+market%3A+Christine+Mehring+on+the+birth+of+the+contemporary...-a0178085096>

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

commercial gallerists, Ernst Beyeler, Trudi Bruckner and Balz Hilt brought together 90 galleries and 30 publishers for its inaugural edition. As literature about this event suggests over 16,000 visitors attended.¹⁰⁶ Within the early editions of *Art Basel* and *Kunstmarkt Köln*, in addition to the booth presentations of the participating commercial galleries, we see early evidence of the incorporation of special 'non-commercial' projects alongside the business function of the fair. In 1973 *Art Basel* presented the first in a series of one-country special exhibitions titled *American Art After Jackson Pollock*. In 1975 *Kunstmarkt Köln* had a supporting programme curated by art critic Elisabeth Jappe comprising of performances within Cologne city centre by Welfare State; a collective of radical artists and thinkers who explored ideas of celebratory art and spectacle between 1968 and 2006. Additionally Jérôme Savary's, Grand Magic Circus and Friedrich Gulda gave two concerts.¹⁰⁷

As can be seen from photographs documenting the early editions of *Art Basel* we see how it too followed a layout of individual white walled booths organised in a grid-like formation.¹⁰⁸

Four years later in Paris, the 1974 inaugural edition of the *Salon international d'art contemporain* takes place in an old railway station in the Bastille area of the city with 84 galleries participating. Seeing the emergence of fairs in Basel and Cologne, La Spodex, a company that specialised in organising trade fairs, set out to deliver a like-

¹⁰⁶ *Art Basel*, (no date), Artbasel.com, Our history, milestones [Online] [Accessed 28th September 2015] <https://www.artbasel.com/about/history>

¹⁰⁷ Herzog, G (no date), *Art Cologne, A history of the First Modern Art Fair* [Online] <http://www.artcologne.com/ART-COLOGNE/Trade-fair/History-of-ART-COLOGNE/index.php>

¹⁰⁸ *Art Basel*, (no date), Artbasel.com, Our history, milestones [Online] [Accessed 28th September 2015] <https://www.artbasel.com/about/history>

minded art fair in Paris. After its first year the fair adopted an organising committee called COFiAc which, like its international art fair counterparts, comprised of representatives from commercial galleries. In selecting Denise René, Henri Jobbé-Duval, Jean-Robert Arnaud amongst others for its committee, the fair adhered to the same decision making structure as that of its peers. In 1977 the fair received a new name, *Foire internationale d'art contemporain*, (FIAC), and moved to a new location, the Grand Palais building. As photographic and video evidence from this 1977 event shows, FIAC like its peer group of fairs, also used white walled booths as its display format. What this video evidence also reveals is an early articulation of the dual function of the art fair as cultural as well as commercial platform. In an audio interview recorded at the time with art critic Bernard Lamarche Vadel, the dual function of FIAC is further exemplified by his description of the fair as being comprised of forty individual exhibitions, many of very young artists, who are being presented for the first time to the world by the participating galleries.¹⁰⁹

2.i Evolution of the Expanded Art Fair

If the antecedents of the art fair as expanded event can be witnessed in the early editions of *Kunstmarkt Köln*, *Art Basel* and FIAC, it is with the emergence of ARCO

¹⁰⁹ Lamarche Vadel. A (1978), Ina.Fr *Bernard Lamarche Vadel à propos de la FIAC*, [Online] <http://www.ina.fr/audio/P13274296/bernard-lamarche-vadel-a-propos-de-la-fiac-audio.html> and <http://www.ina.fr/contenus-editoriaux/articles-editoriaux/la-foire-internationale-d-art-contemporain/>

in Madrid in 1982 that we see its continuation and development. Here we begin to see the first examples of non-commercial activity being integrated into booth sections of the fair, rather than in separate sections running in parallel to the main activity of the fair. In common with the art fairs described above *ARCO* was also conceived by a commercial gallery, Juana de Aizpuru who established her first gallery in Seville in 1970. Having participated in the early incarnations of both *Art Cologne* and *Art Basel*, de Aizpuru saw an opportunity for a like-minded event in Spain. In line with the previously described fairs, *ARCO* retained the formal layout of individual gallery booths as its display mechanism, however in its first year *ARCO* invited many of the arts and cultural institutions within the city to participate, as well as running a programme of talks and discussions. In 1986 Rosina Gomez Baeza joined *ARCO* as its director and it is considered that under her direction the fair continues its development along artistic as well as commercial lines. As Jorge Diez in the publication, *Madrid Abierto 2004-2008* explains, by including institutional spaces within the fair, organising seminars and forums as well as music, video and performance based events, *ARCO* managed,

...to bring together in the space of a few days more activities than those organised during the rest of the year through the regular programmes of the city's cultural institutions.¹¹⁰

While *ARCO* is noted for its incorporation of curatorial / non-commercial projects, for the purposes here it is still classified as a non-curated art fair. This is due to the fact that once again commercial gallery exhibitors are selected by a selection committee of

¹¹⁰ Diez, J (no date), *Madrid Abierto 2004-2008*, [Online] <http://madridabierto.com/texts/2009-2010/madrid-abierto-2004-2008.html>

commercial galleries and the fact that as a fair it has retained a predominantly white walled booth layout.

While the inaugural edition of *Art Basel* enabled the purchase of books as well as art through its combination of booths by publishers as well as commercial galleries, it is with the appointment in 1991 of Lorenzo A Rudolf as director that we see the expansion of *Art Basel* as a curatorial and discursive platform. Over the next few years under Rudolf's direction we see the introduction in 1995 of the *Art Video Platform*, *Film* section in 1999, and in 2000 the section titled, *Unlimited*. As previously described, *Unlimited* is a section of *Art Basel* that comprises of large scale presentations of film, video, sculpture and installation that takes place within an open plan environment across multiple halls of the trade-fair complex in which *Art Basel* is located. Whilst the selection of exhibitors for the commercial gallery sections of *Art Basel* fair remains under the jurisdiction of a committee of representatives from commercial galleries, *Unlimited* and other sections such as *Film* and the more recently introduced *Parcours*, 'a programme of city-wide, site-specific sculptures, interventions and performances' are curated.¹¹¹ Selected as 'internationally recognised experts in particular spheres of the art world', the curators of these sections are charged with bringing 'an engagingly personal point of view that excites and provokes both experts and the general public.'¹¹²

In 2004, under the new directorship of Samuel Keller, the expansion of *Art Basel*

¹¹¹ *Art Basel* (no date), *About the show, curators* [Online] <https://www.artbasel.com/en/Basel/About-the-Show/Curators>

¹¹² Ibid

as a cultural event as well as sales platform continues with the introduction of *Art Basel Conversations*, a programme of presentations, talks and symposia to 'encourage the exchange of ideas through a series of platform discussions...[that]...focus on collecting and exhibiting art today.'¹¹³ Curated by Maria Finders, the literature for the inaugural *Art Basel Conversations* lists internationally recognised curators such as Hans Ulrich Obrist and James Rondeau as part of the *Art Basel Conversations* advisory team.¹¹⁴

Returning to the time-line of art fair emergence, three years after the appointment of Lorenzo A. Rudolf to *Art Basel* in 1991, we see the beginnings in New York of the *Gramercy International Art Fair*. Founded by commercial gallery representatives, Colin de Land, Pat Hearn, Matthew Marks and Paul Morris, the inaugural *Gramercy International Art Fair* took place in the Gramercy Park Hotel in 1994. Described at the time by Steven Kaplan as being, 'a pragmatic, low-cost alternative to the traditional art fair', the fair took place within the bedrooms of the hotel over one weekend with work, 'spread over the bed, stacked on the bureau, displayed in the bathroom medicine cabinet, marching in measured ranks across the coffee table.'¹¹⁵ Over the next 5 years the *Gramercy International Art Fair* would take place annually at the same New York location as well as in Chateau Marmont and Raleigh Hotel in Los Angeles and Miami respectively. In 1999, after moving the fair to the location of the previously celebrated 1913 *The International Exhibition of Modern*

¹¹³ Keller, S (no date), *Art Basel, Art Basel Conversations 2004 Transcripts*, [Online] https://www.artbasel.com/-/media/ArtBasel/Documents/Transcripts/Introduction_Basel_2004.pdf

¹¹⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁵ Kaplan, S, (1994), Erudit.org, *The New Small* [Online] <http://www.erudit.org/culture/etc1073425/etc1090186/35677ac.pdf>

Art described earlier, the *Gramercy International Art Fair* changed its name to *The Armory* to reflect the history of its new location and became established as an annual event. Taking place in early March, *The Armory* has, since its early hotel incarnations, now followed the format of those art fairs that came before it with sales booths following a grid-like format and a selection committee comprising of commercial gallery representatives. Over time, *The Armory* has also evolved to become a confluence of commercial and non-commercial elements incrementally increasing its *Open Forum* programmes of talks and film screenings and its programme of specially curated projects.

In the thirty two years from the launch of *Kunstmarkt Köln* to the inaugural edition of *The Armory* in 1999 these fairs, along with those described above, were widely considered to be the most important of their type. Indeed their status as the main contemporary art fairs in existence continues for the next four years, as it isn't until 2003 that we see the emergence of another comparable art fair in the form of *Frieze*, (London). As is shown by the evidence presented here it is clear that the art fairs described above moved incrementally towards their expanded definition as commercial and cultural platforms, increasing both their exhibitor levels and special curated sections year on year. The inaugural edition of *Frieze* (London) in 2003 however, adopted this expanded format from the outset and in doing recognised that a new typology of fair had evolved.

2.ii The Expanded Art Fair as Default

Set up as a project of *Frieze Magazine* by two of its editors, Matthew Slotover and Amanda Sharp, in its launch year *Frieze* provided a sales platform for over 100 commercial galleries from all over the world and under the direction of independent curator Polly Staple, brought together a programme of new artists' commissions presented on and off-site under the title of *Frieze Projects*. In addition, a programme of *Frieze Talks* addressed subject areas such as, *The Museum as Sculpture*, *The International Curator* and *Empathy and Criticality* and *Frieze Music*, selected by musician Steve Mackay and *Frieze* assistant editor Dan Fox, added to the fair's event based activity. Like all of the art fairs described above *Frieze's* selection committee for the commercial gallery section comprised of commercial gallery representatives and its display format followed the white walled booth layout of its predecessors.¹¹⁶

Reflecting on the 2014 edition of *Frieze* (London) and on the recent editions of *Art Basel*, *ARCO* and *FIAC* reveals the extent to which the expanded art fair has become a default model. In the intervening years since their inception, *Art Basel*, *FIAC* and *Frieze* for example have all expanded not only in terms of their exhibitor numbers, the size of their audiences and the breadth of their programmes, but also in terms of their geographic expansion.¹¹⁷ The 2014 editions of *Art Basel*, *Art Basel Hong Kong* and *Art Basel Miami* had a combined list of over list over 60 talks and over 130 films in their

¹¹⁶

In 2003 the selection committee comprised of Gavin Brown, Sadie Coles, Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn, Martin Klosterfelde, Maureen Paley, Eva Presenhuber, Toby Webster. *Frieze*, (2003), *100 Galleries Announced for Frieze* [Online] <http://friezelondon.com/press/releases/100-international-galleries-announced-for-frieze-art-fair1/>

¹¹⁷

Art Basel expanded its portfolio of art fairs to *Art Basel Miami* in 2002 and *Art Basel Hong Kong* in 2013. In 2016 *FIAC* proposes to undertake a US version of the fair in Los Angeles, *FIAC*, (no date), *FIAC Los Angeles* [Online] [Accessed 13th August 2015] <http://www.fiac.com/losangeles>

Conversations / Salons and *Film* programmes. This was complemented by the additional activity presented in their *Encounter, Public, Parcours* and *Unlimited* sections, all of which are in addition to the hundreds of booth presentations by commercial galleries.¹¹⁸

The 2013 edition of *FIAC* included a programme of outdoor work by 17 artists in the Jardin Des Tuileries delivered in collaboration with Domaine national du Louvre et des Tuileries. Additionally, an off-site exhibition at Jardin des Plantes and the Museum national d'Histoire naturelle took place on the chosen theme of nature, biodiversity and the environment. An open air presentation of artworks works along the banks of the Seine as part of the *Hors Les Murs* programme and an off-site installation by Tadashi Kawamata in the Place Vendôme also took place complemented by a performance programme presented in the Louvre museum and site specifically, a programme of artists' projections and films as well as a programme of conferences, talks and roundtables under the headings of *Added Value, Art & Science*. All of this presented in addition to the booth presentations of the 184 selected galleries.

The 2015 edition of *ARCO*, included three sections where independent curators were employed directly in the decision making process. Irene Hoffman and Lucía Sanromán were responsible for *#Solo Projects Focus Latin America*, which saw participants selected in relation to three themes, *The Legacy of Latin American Avant-gardes, Rethinking Formalism: Abstraction and vernacular sources* and *Gender*

¹¹⁸ Evidence provided through an analysis of *Art Basel Hong Kong* 2014 press releases, *Art Basel*, 2014 press releases and *Art Basel Miami*, 2013 press releases. *Art Basel*, [Online] <https://www.artbasel.com/en/Press/Press-Releases>

*Performativity and research-based practices in Latin America*¹¹⁹ enabling #Solo Projects to function as

space for analysis of the creative scene and identification of key agents of Latin American contemporary art. That past experience will allow #SoloProjects at ARCOmadrid 2015 to take a new step and evolve to identify and work around a series of key thematic areas and address the work of artists, curators and thinkers investigating on them.¹²⁰

#Opening -young galleries section was selected by curator Chris Sharp alongside recent Goldsmiths MA Curating graduate, Luiza Teixeira de Freitas. For the annual guest country section, which in 2015 was Colombia, curator Juan A. Gaitán chose the galleries that participated in the section *#ArcoColombia*.¹²¹ The ARCO website also illustrates the role that independent and institution based curators play within their *Forum* section, which 'offers a space for dialogue, debate and analysis of creation today'.¹²² Information relating to the 2014 edition listed over 70 independent and institution based curators from across the world taking part alongside an additional 80 critics, collectors and other contemporary art professionals. Additionally, ARCO's 2014 activities also included a collaboration with Lázaro Galdiano Museum, Madrid to

¹¹⁹ ARCO Madrid, Ifema, (2015) , *ARCO Madrid, 2015-#Solo Projects, How to Apply 25 February / 1 March* [Online]

http://www.ifema.es/PresentacionInet/groups/public/documents/formulario/if_063085.pdf

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ ARCO News (2015), *ARCO News #10* [Online]

http://www.ifema.es/newsletters/arco/2015/arconoticia_visitantes_i.html

¹²² ARCO Madrid, Ifema (2015), *Meetings and Forum* [Online]

http://www.ifema.es/arcomadrid_06/Foro/CuratorsandSpeakers2014/index.htm

present collecting seminars whilst the *ARCO Gallery Walk* provided an opportunity to undertake a guided tour of art galleries in Madrid.

Like *Art Basel*, *Frieze* has over time also added additional fairs to its portfolio. *Frieze Masters* which opened in London in 2011 and runs concurrently with the existing *Frieze* (London) gives a platform to art which is defined as ancient and modern, whilst *Frieze* (New York), established in 2012, like its London counterpart, maintains a focus on contemporary art. Both new fairs follow the expanded format to a lesser or greater degree. *Frieze Masters* for example has a talks programme, whilst *Frieze* (New York) in 2014 presented seven new artists' commissions as part of *Frieze Projects* and a programme of existing and newly commissioned sound works as part of *Frieze Sounds* both curated by Cecilia Alemani. In addition a programme of talks took place curated by Tom Eccles (Executive Director, Center [sic] for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, NewYork) and Christy Lange (Associate Editor, *Frieze*, Berlin), while *Frieze Education*, provided a programme of opportunities for school and museum groups,

aimed to encourage a collaborative working process and create an awareness of current practice in the contemporary art world¹²³

2.iii Behind the expansion : Impacts of curatorial engagement

What can be seen from the evidence above is that from two or three art fairs in the 60's and 70's, art fairs have now proliferated with, as described earlier, figures of 180-220+ being reported. In addition to their proliferation what has also been shown is that what began as modest programmes of supplementary activity have grown

¹²³ *Frieze* (no date), [Online] [www.http://friezeprojectsny.org/education/](http://friezeprojectsny.org/education/)

exponentially in the intervening years. In addition to the on-going growth in the number of galleries participating in these fairs, activity outside of the physical confines of the fair has also continued to grow with publicly sited projects, programmes of performances, sculpture, interactions and events.

On the one hand these developments can be read as having their motivation in developing and broadening the cultural offer of the event, increasing and broadening their audience base by giving the event a purpose for those who do not fit into the category of either buyer or seller. In effect this activity turns the art fair into an event with an appeal that transcends economic exchange where,

... '[...] the consumption (not necessarily acquisition) of contemporary art is packaged as a social and cultural experience [...]' ¹²⁴

Read as part of the marketing ambitions of the fair, this strategy generates income through increased footfall leading to increased ticket sales to the fair. Apart from the specially designated VIP / Press access times, all of the fairs listed here in this Chapter charge for admission with costs varying from between £15 to £40 depending on the date and time of access or the status of the audience, (student, 65+ etc.). Increased attendees to the art fair also increase the economic benefit of a wider chain supply, for e.g., hotels, food outlets, transport providers amongst others who benefit from increased visitor numbers which, as well as the positive 'city branding' that such an event can create, aids an economic argument for the proliferation and expansion of art

¹²⁴ Velthuis, O (no date), *The contemporary art market between stasis and flux*, Instituut voor beeldende, audiovisuele and mediakunst, [Online] <http://bamart.be/files/BKveldanalyseOlavVelthuis.pdf>

fairs.¹²⁵ As findings from the TEFAF report show, from their earliest reported audience figures to those listed in 2014, of the art fairs listed 84% report an increase in numbers attending. Taking *Art Basel* (Basel), *Frieze* (London), *The Armory* (New York) and *ARCO* (Madrid) as examples, the TEFAF report shows increases of 464%, 116%, 225% and 300% respectively, with a combined audience in 2014 of 317,000.¹²⁶

To existing or future sponsors of art fairs increased audience equates to increased product exposure and potential new clients. In addition, the cultural capital that their brand receives through association with such high profile cultural events must also be a consideration. For state funders, the increase and broadening of audiences sees art fairs assisting them with their policies for increased public engagement in the arts as well as their policies of promoting entrepreneurialism, philanthropy and public /private partnerships as indicated in the comment made in 2007 by then Cultural Minister James Purnell,

The Frieze art fair raises public awareness of contemporary art, provides

opportunities for artists, stimulates the UK's contemporary art market and

¹²⁵

Douglas, S (2014) Observer, *What is Frieze New York's Economic Impact on the City*, [Online] Figures from the 2013 London edition of *Frieze* as reported on the website www.gallerisny.com report that including *Frieze Masters*, 'the amount spent on accommodation was £9,584,770 (\$16,264,700). Other spending (shops and restaurants) was £13,134,808 (\$22,288,800) and auxiliary spending was £17,289,948 (\$29,339,800)'. <http://gallerisny.com/2014/05/what-is-frieze-new-yorks-economic-impact-on-the-city/>, <http://observer.com/2014/05/what-is-frieze-new-yorks-economic-impact-on-the-city/>

¹²⁶

Daniel, D (2015), *artnetnews, 40 Percent of World Gallery Art Sales Made at Fairs and Other Key Findings in the TEFAF Art Market Report 2015* [Online] [Accessed 14th September 2015] <https://news.artnet.com/market/5-key-findings-from-tefaf-report-2015-276301>

makes a significant contribution to London's economy.¹²⁷

From another perspective the broadening of the art fairs visitor offer can also be seen to have less quantifiable benefits. As *Frieze* co-founder, Amanda Sharp states,

it's not just about dollars into hotel rooms, it's how you impact culture, how you bring audiences to art. Spectacle, enjoyment, joy. Those are measured using different metrics.¹²⁸

Within this comment, we see evidence of the public benefit / cultural ambition that art fairs describe themselves as having. In this narrative the introduction of expanded sections such as new commissions, off-site exhibitions, publicly sited art works and film, music and performance programmes are motivated by a desire to provide more points of access to more art for more people in more places. They can also be read as being founded in the belief that the art fair can successfully operate as a place to view, appreciate and engage in art.

The increase in audiences for contemporary art that fairs such as *Frieze* have generated, also has knock on impact for other creative and cultural producers in the cities in which the fairs take place. Aware of the potential for extra audience, other actors within the visual art ecology respond with specific programmes, all of which adds to a critical mass of activity occurring during the timescale of the art fair. Public

¹²⁷ Harris G, Bailey M (2007) *Government Backs Frieze*, The Art Newspaper / Frieze Art Daily [Online] 10th October 2007, [Accessed 14th September 2015] <http://old.theartnewspaper.com/fairs%5CFrieze%5C2007%5C1.pdf>

¹²⁸ Douglas. S (2014) Observer, *What is Frieze New York's Economic Impact on the City*, [Online] Figures from the 2013 London edition of Frieze as report on the website www.gallerisny.com report that including Frieze Masters, 'the amount spent on accommodation was £9,584,770 (\$16,264,700). Other spending (shops and restaurants) was £13,134,808 (\$22,288,800) and auxiliary spending was £17,289,948 (\$29,339,800)'. <http://gallerisny.com/2014/05/what-is-frieze-new-yorks-economic-impact-on-the-city/> <http://observer.com/2014/05/what-is-frieze-new-yorks-economic-impact-on-the-city/>

and private museums, artist led and commercial galleries alike, coordinate their programming to coalesce around 'fair weeks' and as art journalist Louisa Buck states in her keynote in the transcript of the 2012 Market Matters symposium, not even the largest contemporary art institutions are immune,

I remember interviewing Nicholas Serota for my book, *Owning Art*, and him saying really quite grumpily that we now have to completely organise Tate's schedule around Frieze week to the extent that they even open up the Turbine Hall to coincide with everybody coming into town.¹²⁹

Again seeking to capitalise upon the extra potential footfall and attention that the main art fairs attract, satellite art fairs have also proliferated. With over 20 satellite art fairs listed as taking place in December in Miami at the same time as the 2013 edition of *Art Basel Miami*,¹³⁰ and between 12 and 16 variously reported as taking place alongside *Frieze* (New York) in May 2014¹³¹ we are seeing as, *The Art Newspaper* reports, record numbers of satellite art fair activity.¹³² This year on year increase can be seen as a

¹²⁹ Buck, L (2012), DACS.org.uk *The New Economy of Art Series, Market Matters*, [Online] <https://www.dacs.org.uk/DACSO/media/DACSDocs/news/Market-Matters-transcript.pdf>

¹³⁰ Negrete T.F. (2013), Miami.com, *Art Basel Miami Beach 2013: Satellite fairs again dot Miami* [Online] <http://www.miami.com/art-basel-miami-beach-2013-satellite-fairs-again-dot-miami-article>. The fairs listed were *Aqua Art Fair, Art Miami, Arts Kuala-Lumpur Miami, Brazil Art Fair, Context Art Miami, Design Miami, Fridge Art Fair, Ink Miami Art Fair, Miami Project, Miami Street Photography Fair, Miami River Art Fair, NADA Art Fair, New Material, Pulse Miami, Red Dot Miami, Select Art Fair, Scope Miami, Seven, Spectrum Miami, Untitled*.

¹³¹ Holland, LH, (2014) nytimes.com, *Frieze, and Other Fairs That Tag Along*, [Online] http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/09/arts/design/frieze-and-other-fairs-that-tag-along.html?_r=0 The fairs listed were *Collective 2 Design Fair, Contemporary Art Fair NYC, Cutlog, Downtown Fair, NADA NYC, Outsider Art Fair, Pool Art Fair, Pulse New York, Salon Zürcher, The Satellite Show, Select Fair, Verge NYC*.

¹³² Halerpin J, (2014), *The Art Newspaper, Satellite fairs flock to Frieze New York* [Online] <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Satellite-fairs-flock—to-Frieze-New-York/32611> also via

direct result of the proliferation of the main art fairs they sit alongside and their increase would once again suggest evidence of the existence of high gallery, visitor and collector demand as without this, the fairs would not have a reason to exist.

Within the examples of non-curated art fairs described above, the curatorial role can be summarised as serving both the cultural ambition and expansionist tendency of the art fair. In the examples of the curated art fairs that follow in Chapter Three, we will see how the curatorial role is being employed to refine and redefine the art fair model. Here the art fair is being streamlined and stripped back to those elements that are seen as the most essential to facilitate the exchange of the art work as both artistic and commercial object.

http://www.galeriezurcher.com/press/satellite-fairs-flock-to-frieze-new-york_1091 The Art Newspaper presents how the introduction of *Frieze New York* to the art fair calendar in May, has encouraged a number of satellite fairs to move from previously running alongside *The Armory* in March.

Chapter 3 : From *VOLTA* to *Sluice* : establishing the characteristics of the curated art fair : evidencing and interpreting the impact of the curatorial role

As described in the Introduction, in order to obtain additional perspectives on the subject of the impact of the curatorial role upon the art fair model, I have identified four art fairs that I consider intrinsic to this discussion. Each example was selected both for their own specific qualities, but also due to the fact that by emerging one after another in a time-line, they also suggested that a new typology of art fair was occurring. As described earlier this new typology is what I have classified for the purposes of this study as the *curated art fair*.

Using evidence provided by the interviewees alongside my own personal experience of attending these art fairs, I illustrate on a case by case basis the characteristics which, for the purposes of this thesis, determine them to be curated art fairs. In addition, in order to test my hypothesis that the curated art fair deals ‘properly’ with the relationship between art and money, this Chapter also reveals on a case by case basis how I consider that the curated art fair creates distance between the art and its status as an object for sale and distance between the event and its status as a site of sales. In doing so this Chapter seeks to argue that in the curated art fair the artistic and symbolic rather than the financial value of the artworks are privileged, leading to an environment where the ‘contamination model’ represented by the theory of ‘hostile worlds’ is untenable.¹³³

While not all of the case study interviewees describe their art fairs as curated

¹³³ Velthuis, O. (2003) Symbolic meanings of prices: Constructing the value of contemporary art in Amsterdam and New York galleries , *Theory and Society*, 32, Netherlands, Kluwer Academic Publishers pp,181-215 [Accessed 10.09.15] http://www.aacorn.net/members_all/velthuis_olav/pricemeaning.pdf

exhibitions as such, their use of terms such as curated platform, collective exhibition or forum reveal how curatorial concerns and the conditions of exhibition-making still inform their decision making processes. In fact in some of these examples, a wide definition of curating is referenced, one that is defined not only by the act of content selection, presentation and contextualisation but also by the act of curating people and their personal and professional interests, to allow for fruitful dialogues between the exhibitors to take place.

While these four art fairs provide key examples of their type, other art fairs which I also consider to be curated art fairs have occurred within the same time-frame. Setting the case studies within a wider historical survey therefore, I seek to illustrate how rather than one-off projects, curated art fairs represent a permanent shift in the conception, design, delivery and impact of the art fair model. As Chapter Four will illustrate, this shift has not only resulted in the curated art fair becoming a new typology of art fair, but is also now impacting on the design and delivery of the non-curated art fairs which they sought to address.

3.i The conditions of curated art fairs: case study 1: *VOLTA* (Basel and New York)

VOLTA was set up by the curator and critic Amanda Coulson alongside art dealers, Ulrich Voges and Kavi Gupta in 2004 in Basel, with an additional location of New York added in 2008. Occurring annually during the same time period as *Art Basel*, *VOLTA* (Basel) like the other case study examples presented here, can also be defined as a satellite art fair. In addition to the presence of curator Amanda Coulson, *VOLTA* has gone on to include other independent curators, such as Christian Viveros-Fauné within their selection processes. In their introducing of curators to their exhibitor selection

processes, *VOLTA* is widely considered to be one of the first art fairs to do so,

Breaking away from the traditional fair format of having a committee of galleries judge their peers, *VOLTA* asked internationally-known art critics and curators to bring their expertise to the table.¹³⁴

For *VOLTA* this involvement of curators in the selection process has a three-fold rationale. In the first instance, the introduction of the independent curator onto the *VOLTA* selection panel is an attempt to overcome conflicts of interest which may arise due to commercial competitiveness between peer-group galleries. As Amanda Coulson stated in our case study interview,

I have been on committees, it gets very political of course, because the gallery has an agenda, they don't want some particular galleries around them, because maybe they share an artist, maybe whatever it might be, they had some story...we all always found it problematic that galleries... judging other galleries...[it is]... a bit like telling Porsche they could decide who would get into the into the car show, right ?¹³⁵

It is an opinion supported by Paco Barragán, who in his 2008 *Saatchiart.com* articles states,

That basically means that for almost 40 years the selection committees of the majority of art fairs were composed of galleries which are neither sufficiently

¹³⁴ *VOLTA* (2008), Voltashow.com, *VOLTA NY Press Release* [Online]
http://voltashow.com/fileadmin/volta/VOLTA_NY/press_releases/VOLTANY_03mar08.pdf

¹³⁵ Coulson, A (2014) from Case Study interview undertaken at *VOLTA* Basel art fair on 17th July 2014

impartial nor sufficiently transparent in order to use their power of inclusion or exclusion well.¹³⁶

Secondly by involving the independent curator within the selection process it is expected that the fair can take advantage of the research facility that these relationships provide as, 'agents out in the world, we had one curator from Japan and one from Los Angeles'.¹³⁷ Thirdly, as a voice independent from any one individual commercial gallery agenda, it is thought that the artistic over the market value of artists can be privileged.

so we thought why don't we actually involve people that look at a lot of art but maybe come at it from a different way, and the other thing, was that galleries are of course very very concerned with the market, so we thought it might be interesting, to invite a group of people that were looking at work with other concepts in mind.¹³⁸

Through the introduction of the curatorial role, the ambition of the curated art fair is to allow the selection of galleries and their artists to impact upon the potential for relationships between the works selected and the fair as a whole.

The brief our curators are given is to really look at the artwork being presented in the application and to consider how the whole will function together.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Barragán, P (2009), Canvas, Saatchi Art, *On The Age of The Art Fair*, [Online] <http://canvas.saatchiart.com/articles/culture/reviews/books/paco-barragan-on-the-age-of-the-art-fair>

¹³⁷ Coulson, A (2014) from Case Study interview undertaken at VOLTA Basel art fair on 17th July 2014

¹³⁸ Ibid

¹³⁹ Ibid

Like the non-curated art fairs described in Chapter Two, *VOLTA* has also involved curators in the devising and delivery of additional parallel programmes of activity such as outdoor sculpture programmes, country specific activity such as *Nordic Focus* in 2009, special projects and talks. While these ancillary sections have come and gone over the years, the fair's commitment to a curatorial focus for its selection of galleries and artists has remained consistent.

In addition to selecting exhibitors, *VOLTA* also sees the art fair catalogue as part of the curatorial direction of the art fair. The majority of art fairs produce catalogues to accompany their art fairs. These documents, for the most part comprise of general information about the galleries, images of work being exhibited, descriptions of the artists being presented and a series of introductions and contextualising texts written by the fair directors and curators, alongside a number of pages taken over by brand appropriate advertising. For fairs such as *Art Basel*, *The Armory* and *ARCO*, due to their scale and scope, these become substantial and expensive documents to produce and purchase. *Art Basel* for example, has multiple catalogues to accompany its different country specific fairs (USA, Hong Kong, Switzerland) and the different sections of each fair with the 2014 editions costing over £40 each. From the outset *VOLTA* knew that they wanted the catalogue to function as an extension of the curatorial direction of the fair and to provide a dual function of being a document both for the visitor and also for the gallery.

For the 2013 and 2014 editions of *VOLTA* Basel in which The International 3 participated, each exhibitor was asked to provide a statement which contextualised the artists and works that they were bringing to the art fair. In doing so this echoes the

process of application where each gallery is asked to provide a booth concept articulating, the who? what? and why? of what they intend to show at the art fair. These statements are accompanied by images and brief biographies of the artists and a description of the gallery. Printed black and white, double sided on A4 paper and then folded portrait to make an A5 document, it is produced in very large numbers and given away for free. It is also displayed by each gallery on their booth presented in A5 clear plastic information holder, much as one would find in a gallery setting. Visitors are also provided with a custom made folder into which they are able to collate individual catalogue pages from specific galleries that interest them.

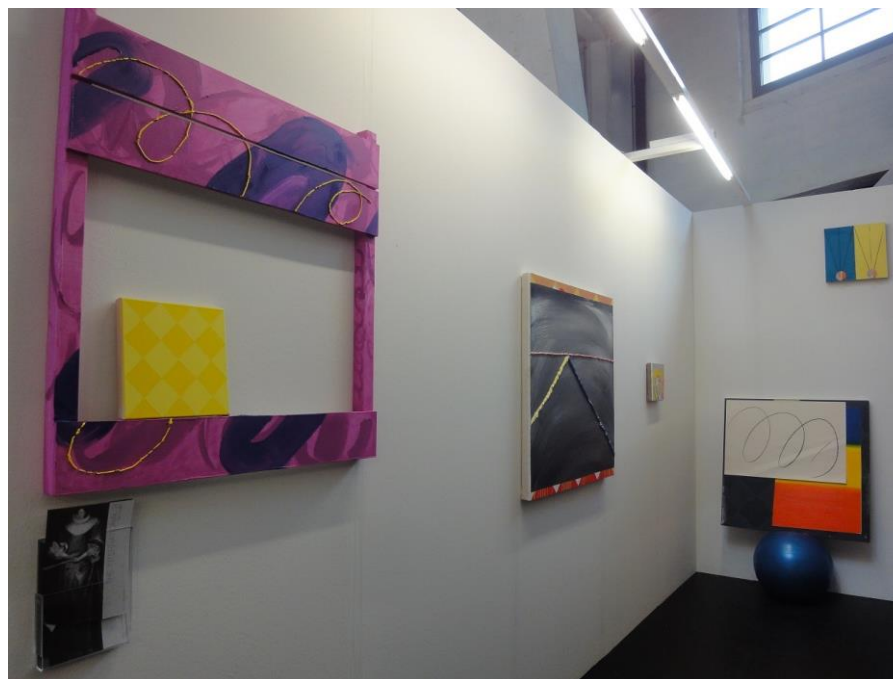


Fig. 2 The International 3 booth at *VOLTA* art fair, 2014 showing *VOLTA* catalogue bottom left hand corner of image.

Taking into consideration the content, the format, the method of production and method of display, the *VOLTA* catalogue functions much in the same way as a press release in the setting of a gallery space might do. They provide a combination of

practical and interpretative information without displaying any prices for the works on view. Coulson admits however, that she has previously considered not producing the catalogues but was quickly reminded of their importance by one of their key audiences, curators,

a lot of the curators were like, no, catalogues are really important and actually what is missing...[at art fair's] is there is not enough text...that is always a problem at a fair isn't it?, how do you contextualise all of this stuff and so I think that is where curators help as we were always thinking about how we could make sense of it because that is really what curating is, telling a story.¹⁴⁰

As a further extension of the curatorial role acting upon the selection of artworks for display, *VOLTA*'s expansion to New York in 2008 saw the fair follow a strict solo artist presentation policy. This saw the steering group decide on a selection of artists that they wanted to exhibit at the fair first and by consequence their gallery. As a process this was contrary to the majority of both curated and non-curated art fairs which invite galleries to participate on the basis of the artists they propose to show.

with the first couple of fairs in New York we had a theme and we tried to invite the artists, more than the gallery really.¹⁴¹

Here, the solo projects are considered as providing an opportunity for an engagement with an artists' practice rather than with individual works. By focusing on one artist the gallery is better able to contextualise their practice by providing numerous examples of

¹⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁴¹ Ibid

their work. This decision also emphasised the commitment of the New York edition of the art fair to have its identity defined as an exhibition of artists, as opposed to a presentation of galleries. As an extension of this commitment, the catalogue for the *VOLTA* (New York) 2010 edition, in which The International 3 also participated, saw each gallery asked only to provide a double page art work by the artist they were presenting at the fair. In addition to a front cover which only listed the names of the ninety artists being presented, a back cover providing one small paragraph of acknowledgments and six pages of adverts, the main focus of this publication was on providing a platform for the presentation of art work. The effect was that of artists' book rather than an art fair catalogue. No additional contextualising information was requested from the gallery relating to the artworks or the artists and not even the title, date or materials information of the works were included on the pages. The only text was the name of the artist printed above the name of the gallery and the gallery's booth number. In a quote taken from the *VOLTA* website it is clear that from the outset *VOLTA* (New York) sought to articulate its purpose as being to privilege the art viewing experience and to evidence the curatorial considerations within the conceptualisation and delivery of the art fair,

By putting the focus back on artists through exclusively featuring solo projects, *VOLTA* NY promotes a deep exploration of the work of its selected projects, an opportunity for discoveries that move beyond those afforded by a traditional art fair. While many fairs provide a broader overview, with more represented

artists in each booth, visitors to VOLTA NY compare the experience to a more focused series of intense studio visits.¹⁴²

As an approach it has now been adopted by its Basel edition of *VOLTA*, which while always having had a selection panel including curators, since 2011 has decided to put a higher focus on solo booths and two artist proposals.

Revisiting the original VOLTA concept of a selection of tightly focused emerging international galleries, including an inspirational new presentation format of mainly solo and two-person shows, guaranteed new discoveries and the expected exclusivity that made the art event feel more like a series of small exhibitions than a trade fair.¹⁴³

Within this communication, we see *VOLTA* clearly making a distinction between the conditions of viewing art within an exhibition and within a trade fair, suggesting that the decisions it has made in terms of exhibitor and artist selection and the prescribed format of one or two artists, aligns with the former.

As an extension of the fair's curatorial ambitions, the participating artist and gallery selection for the early editions of *VOLTA* (New York), was framed by a title. Once again echoing elements within curatorial and exhibition-making processes these titles suggest that in addition to the curators' brief to look in depth at the artists and artworks that form part of the applicant galleries proposals, the selection is also being driven by an overarching thematic concern. Under the direction of art critic and

¹⁴² *VOLTA* (no date) ny.voltashow.com, *VOLTA NY*, [Online] <http://ny.voltashow.com/ABOUT.5726.0.html>

¹⁴³ *VOLTA* (no date), voltashow.com, *Archive* [Online] <http://voltashow.com/ARCHIVE.1564.0.html>

curator, Amanda Coulson and curator Christian Viveros-Fauné, the 2008 inaugural edition of the New York fair, was called *The Eye of the Beholder* and the 2010 edition titled, *No Guts No Glory*. As the press release for 2008 editions states,

VOLTA NY is an exhibition contained within the format of an art fair...the show considers among other themes, beauty and its opposite-that is the twin polarities presented by criticality and aesthetics in contemporary art'¹⁴⁴

As Amanda Coulson reveals, the title of the 2008 edition, reflected curatorial research by the team that had recognised a critical mass appearing within artists sculptural practice, 'we were noticing a lot of rough ceramics, we thought that was really interesting'.¹⁴⁵ This theme therefore provided a thread along which artists and therefore galleries were selected for the fair. Whilst the press response to the thematic curating of the fair was well received with the comments from press such as the *New York Times* and *Artnet.com* describing the fair as, 'fresh and notably successful' and 'the perfect fair', both for its size and curated character, Coulson admits that there was a backlash from galleries in relation to this approach.¹⁴⁶ For the main part, this criticism related to the rationale for artist selection being considered from a curatorial, rather than an economic perspective. As Coulson relates,

the backlash we had was 'well I could have told you I wouldn't have sold this here, this isn't the market for it, we know what shows our artists have

¹⁴⁴ VOLTA (2008), Voltashow.com, *VOLTA NY Press Release* [Online]
http://voltashow.com/fileadmin/volta/VOLTA_NY/press_releases/VOLTANY_03mar08.pdf

¹⁴⁵ Coulson, A (2014) from Case Study interview undertaken at VOLTA Basel art fair on 17th July 2014

¹⁴⁶ VOLTA (2008), Voltashow.com, *VOLTA NY Press Release* [Online]
http://voltashow.com/fileadmin/volta/VOLTA_NY/press_releases/VOLTANYMarch30.pdf

upcoming, and...[for which artist]... it makes sense to be in the city at that time,
know the collectors¹⁴⁷

The curatorial approach as described with *The Eye of The Beholder* looked at the fair experience as a whole and sought to develop a narrative rationale to determine the selection and presentation of the work on display. From the gallery perspective the decision about which artist to show was made for them without, as they saw it, an appreciation of the artist's actual or potential market position. Here we see evidence of a key point of conflict between the curatorial considerations of the art fair organisers and the economic considerations of the participating galleries. It is a point which is developed later in this chapter when we look at how the reconfiguration of the spatial design of the art fair impacts on the economy of fair delivery and on the commercial reading of the art works on display.

VOLTA's curatorial engagement is demonstrated through their interest in replicating the conditions of viewing art in the artists' studio and viewing art in the site of exhibition. It is demonstrated through their selection and display of content, their introduction of over-arching curatorial themes and their accompanying interpretative materials such as the catalogue and artists' books. *VOLTA* hasn't however, as part of its core ethos adopted an open-space format. While for the inaugural iteration of the *VOLTA* (New York) art fair in 2008, to which I was a visitor, large open spaces were created by the reduction three-walled booths, in later editions of the fair this was less of a focus. In fact this decision to reduce walls was in fact a site-specific response to the curatorial premise of the show and was deemed necessary to support the presentation

¹⁴⁷ Coulson, A (2014) from Case Study interview undertaken at *VOLTA* Basel art fair on 17th July 2014

of the large volume of sculpture and 3D assemblage that had been selected for the fair. Being my first experience as a visitor to a fair that had broken away from the usual grid-like structure, I was conscious of how this allowed for a fluidity within the viewing experience, works were able to be seen in direct relationship to one another due to the sight-lines offered by the opened up spaces. There was less of a sense of a prescribed pathway for the viewer to take around the fair which, along with the fact that there was more space for the visitors to spread out, enabled me to feel that I was having more of an individual rather than a group experience.

From the case study interview the desire to have less walls as a means of better presenting the work and creating a better visitor experience is something that Coulson readily admits, 'less walls would be nice...in creating less of a rabbit warren feeling',¹⁴⁸ but as she continues,

In fact the first New York had very few walls, and it was mostly open space and even here,[VOLTA Basel 2014] ...I think it is so much better to have a two-walled corner booth, and leave it open than to have the wall because what happens is you end up with a corridor. Whereas if you take those walls away you end up with a big piazza¹⁴⁹

However, she is aware of a number of issues with trying to continue an open space approach within the *VOLTA*. The first, as she explains, is how such an approach can be limiting to what work can be shown and by consequence bring with it a negative sales impact. With fewer walls, less 2D work can be shown making the way for more 'sales

¹⁴⁸ Ibid

¹⁴⁹ Ibid

challenging' sculpture, installation, video and performance. This is further exemplified and supported by the second reason, the response that she has received from galleries to her occasional wall reducing attempts. From an economic perspective Coulson explains some galleries equate more walls with an increased potential for financial return

...quite often dealers are like I have to have as much as I can on the walls because you know if I get enough up then something is going to hit and I think that's not actually the case...¹⁵⁰

Coulson goes on to argue that from her experience of running both editions of *VOLTA* for ten years, the more comfortable the viewing experience for the visitor the more likely the gallery is to make a sale,

...I think as a visitor if you come in and you don't feel overwhelmed and you don't feel hemmed in, you will spend longer there, you won't want to get out quickly, and you will probably buy more and I can't prove it, but I have the feeling because I have seen it when booths do it, that actually works...¹⁵¹

Secondly, Coulson sees that a barrier to *VOLTA* becoming fully open space is also down to the economics of the fair itself,

Of course that then comes to economics also for the fair organiser, because I would love to have even less booths but of course you need to maximise the square footage. If the building costs x amount to rent, you know the harsh realities of bringing a flat-bed truck with enough walls for 20 booths or for 80

¹⁵⁰ Ibid

¹⁵¹ Ibid

booths is the same costs - so if you only bring enough for 20 booths you aren't amortising the costs of the flat-bed truck...you need to find that balance between doing enough that it makes sense to do it and not doing so many that it ruins the sense.¹⁵²

And finally, Coulson also notes a potential issue for sales with the lack of privacy that the open space approach brings with it. Coulson worries that collectors might be less willing to offer privileged information or enter into negotiations in such a scenario.

The dealer is there to sell and what are the conditions of selling? Part of those conditions is privacy which is one reason why walls won't break down completely because I think it is very difficult to have a negotiation with a client if everyone can hear you, someone is like standing there waiting for that client they know to walk over to them, so privacy, that's something and you know being kind of able to keep the collector focused could be hard in a completely open plan one.¹⁵³

In the example of *VOLTA* the curatorial role is evidenced in the following ways: as a conceiver of art fairs, as a producer of art fair curatorial briefs, as a selector of the art fairs artists and gallery exhibitors, director of how the content is spatially organised and as the producer of the framework through which contextualising written material about the artists and art works on display is presented. Here the curatorial role is seen as integral to the whole art fair rather than to specific strands of activity as in the case of non-curated art fairs described in Chapter Two. In the three case study examples

¹⁵² ibid

¹⁵³ ibid

that follow we can also add to this list of characteristics a re-examination of the spatial layout of the art fair which sees the curator not only acting upon how the content is selected and mediated, but also upon its modes of presentation.

3.ii The conditions of curated art fairs: re-evaluating their spatial design : case studies 2 and 3 *Sunday* and *Independent*

Unlike *VOLTA*, *Sunday* and *Independent* were conceived at the outset by a group of commercial galleries. In the case of *Sunday*, commercial galleries Limoncello (London), Croy Neilsen (Berlin) and Tulips and Roses (Brussels) comprised the organising committee for the first 2010 London edition of the fair. This took place after an initial launch in Berlin in 2009. *Independent* was launched in 2010 and was conceived by gallerists, Darren Flook (Hotel, London) and Elizabeth Dee (Elizabeth Dee, New York). As a distinction from the decision making processes of non-curated art fairs however, while not being the conceiver of the art fair, the role of independent curator occupies a position of advisor and selector of art fair participants. As will be shown by the opinions expressed in our conversations, in addition to this specific role, the decisions of steering group galleries themselves are also informed by curatorial thinking and curatorial processes. Thus when considering how the curatorial role is evidenced in curated art fairs, it is described both as an individual that occupies a specific role as well as being a set of conditions that inform decision making.

In terms of exemplifying the curatorial role with regard to *Sunday* and *Independent*, in the first instance both are invitational which means that they comprise of a handpicked group of galleries invited to participate without an open application

process.¹⁵⁴ Taking into consideration recommendations from other peer group galleries, curators and other arts professionals whose opinions are solicited, the steering groups put together lists of potential exhibitors to approach. In this instance therefore, the curatorial role can be seen as taking place pre-invitation in the research and identification process. Here the decisions about who they choose to solicit opinions from and why, marks out the particular areas of the contemporary art world that the art fairs are investigating and as such the identity of the art fair is formed from these decisions made.

In addition to occupying a position within an extended group of people who generate the long list of potential participants, both *Sunday* and *Independent* have also appointed curators directly to exhibitor decision making and directorial capacities within their fairs. For *Sunday*, in previous years this role has been undertaken by curator Rob Tufnell while for *Independent*, curator Matthew Higgs, has occupied the role of Creative Advisor.¹⁵⁵ As can be seen therefore, just as *VOLTA* engages the curatorial role in content selection so too do *Sunday* and *Independent*.

In a further echo of *VOLTA*, from the outset both *Independent* and *Sunday* announced their motivations as having critical as well as commercial objectives. Within marketing materials produced at the time, *Independent* and *Sunday* can both be seen to subsume the commercial imperative in favour of a language that gave precedence to the presentation of the art on display and to the re-evaluating of the art-fair model. As

¹⁵⁴ At the time of writing *Sunday* has changed its selection processes by introducing an open application process rather than an invitational process.

¹⁵⁵ Once again, at the time of writing it is unclear whether or not for the 2015 edition an overarching curator / director role is in place.

the 2010 website for *Independent* stated,

Part consortium, part collective, Independent lies somewhere between a collective exhibition and a re-examination of the art fair model, reflecting the changing attitudes and growing challenges for artists, galleries, curators and collectors.¹⁵⁶

This philosophy continues to the present day with *Independent's* Creative Advisor, Matthew Higgs stating in a 2014 interview with *Artnet.com* that *Independent* tries to, 'create an environment that privileges the artist's work.'¹⁵⁷ Similarly, *Sunday* described on their 2010 website the background ethos to their inaugural 2009 Berlin version as being,

The idea was to create an easy going and accessible temporary platform where galleries can set up their exhibitions in the most unconstrained ways....

The participating galleries shared three spacious floors of the building without any partitioning walls or individual booths - ensuring an open atmosphere for the visitors.¹⁵⁸

It too is an ethos that carries through to the present day with *Sunday's* 2015 website describing the fair as,

¹⁵⁶ *Independent* (2010), independentnewyork.com *Hybrid Forum Comes to New York for Art Fair Week* [Online] <http://www.independentnewyork.com/information.html>

¹⁵⁷ Manus E, (2014), artnet news, *artnet asks: Matthew Higgs*, [Online] <http://news.artnet.com/art-world/artnet-asks-matthew-higgs-1010>

¹⁵⁸ *Sunday* (2010), *Sunday* [Online] www.sunday-fair.com

an opportunity to discover the next generation of artists and galleries in a relaxed and open plan environment.¹⁵⁹

In the case of *Independent*, the decision not to adopt the uniform white walled booth structure of the non-curated art fairs that had gone before had multiple motivators.



Fig 3: Example of spatial design of an art fair using a grid of white walled exhibitor booths along avenues, London Art Fair 2015

In conceiving *Independent*, co-founders gallerists Elizabeth Dee and Darren Flook looked at what they didn't like about existing art fairs and realised that once they started to do this so much about the dominant art fair model had unquestioningly continued to exist,

¹⁵⁹ *Sunday* (no date), *Sunday*, [Online] [Accessed 28th September 2015] www.sunday-fair.com

The art-fair model hadn't really been questioned at all...once you start to take it all apart you realise there is so much there because the last person did it.¹⁶⁰

One of the key things to be introduced after this process of deconstruction, or New Fairism investigation, was a custom-made approach to presenting the art. Rather than providing a pre-determined booth structure for galleries to fill, *Independent* aims to build the presentation format around the requirements of the art chosen for display.

We can try to work out to the best of our abilities what people are going to show - are they going to show sculpture ?...o.k. so we can put you in the space in front of the window which doesn't have much wall.¹⁶¹

Where walls do exist therefore they are part of the structure of the building or are required by the specifics of the work or gallery presentation and as Flook describes are, museum style walls...I think if someone has invested time and effort in making something and someone else has invested time and money in shipping it then the work should be treated with respect. .¹⁶²

Another consideration behind the reconfiguring of the spatial layout of the fair is also economic. Echoed in the interviews with Rebecca May Marston and Karl England that follow, the recognition that less walls are cheaper is readily made, allowing as it does, for savings to be passed on to galleries in terms of lower participation fees. As Darren Flook says their addressing of the existing art fair format was about,

¹⁶⁰ Flook, D, (2012), Case study transcripts, phone Interview 30th May 2012

¹⁶¹ Ibid

¹⁶² Ibid

getting rid of all the fat on something and completely stripping it back to make it as easy and as cheap as possible for the galleries.¹⁶³

Through its selecting of galleries and art works to be presented and its consideration of their placement within the space in relation to each other, it is my reading that *Independent* is striving to replicate the conditions of presenting art in the site of exhibition. Also with a focus on the materials used they are also seeking to replicate the conditions and quality of museum-like modes of presentation.

The best viewing experience is normally the gallery and you are trying to get as close as that...trying to show [the work] in as close to a gallery setting as possible.¹⁶⁴

Rather than calling this process curated however, Flook prefers to consider,

'[Independent] to be sensitive rather than specifically curated. It's like trying to get it to feel the best for everyone.'¹⁶⁵

It is a distinction also made by Matthew Higgs when he says,

I don't think one could necessarily say that it's [Independent] a curated exhibition, but it's definitely a curated forum or curated platform.¹⁶⁶

What is clear from these comments is that *Independent* is driven by a concern to privilege the presentation of the art and the experience of the galleries taking part. As Flook continues,

¹⁶³

Ibid

¹⁶⁴

Ibid

¹⁶⁵

Ibid

¹⁶⁶

Goldstein, A M, (2015), *Artspace, Independent's Matthew Higgs on Finding Space in the Market for Underdogs*, [Online] [Accessed 13th August 2015]
http://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews_features/expert_eye/matthew-higgs-independent-interview-52636

It isn't about creating the perfect situation for a collector to come and see as much art as possible, it's about creating something that galleries like to do and artists want to make work for and where the work stands a chance of looking the best it can.¹⁶⁷

Like *Independent, Sunday* also takes place within an open-space format with the only walls being those already present or required by gallery for the specifics of the art works or and their desired booth display.

Rebecca May Marston, whose opinions in this thesis are to be read as her own rather than as representative of the *Sunday* steering committee, states that in populating *Sunday* consideration is also taken as to where art works are sited in relation to the whole.¹⁶⁸

...we tried to place [the work] so that it would be a nice fair, a nice sort of coherent experience as a fair as a whole.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Flook, D, (2012), Case study transcripts, phone Interview 30th May 2012

¹⁶⁸ As described earlier, Limoncello was one of three galleries who comprised the steering committee for *Sunday*. Limoncello occupied this position between 2010-2012. The opinions presented by Rebecca are to be noted as her own and not as representative of the views of the steering committee as a whole.

¹⁶⁹ Marston, R M (2012) Case study transcripts, phone 11th July 2012



Fig. 4, view across *Sunday* 2015, showing open space presentation format with limited walling

As with *Independent*, Rebecca also does not consider Sunday to be a curated exhibition saying rather that, 'is something they are working towards'¹⁷⁰ having at the time of our interview in 2012 employed a director to oversee the exhibitor selection and talk to galleries in advance about what they were going to show. While not considered by one of its organisers as curated, my direct experience as a visitor to *Sunday* in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2014 showed that it was more closely aligned to experiencing art in a large scale exhibition environment. In *Sunday* as with *Independent*, little in the way of formal demarcation existed between one presentation and the other. In the case of *Sunday* where this did exist, it was discreet. In the early editions of the fair white painted lines were used on the floor to designate one presentation area from another along with the name of each gallery spelled out in vinyl lettering and grey painted museum-like plinths held press releases headed with the *Sunday* logo. These structures punctuated the space creating subtle boundary distinctions, while the documents they held gave an

¹⁷⁰ Ibid

introduction to the works on display and biographic details of the artists.

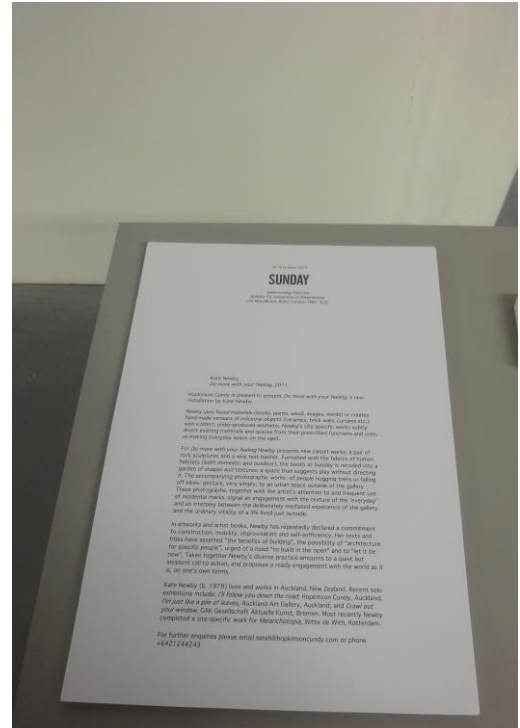


Fig. 5 and Fig 6, white floor tape demarcating individual gallery spaces and grey plinths, with logoed press releases at *Sunday* 2010.

Like the printed sheets provided in *VOLTA*, *Sunday's* paperwork echoes the language of exhibition-making with the art works on display being contextualised within a description of both the artist and the gallery's wider motivations. As with *VOLTA* these documents were presented in a house-style and as such created a sense of visual cohesion across the space, linking each presentation physically together. Once again these documents did not include information about the prices of the works on display and, as with *Independent*, the overt use of price lists or labels next to the work were not standard. In fact, in most critically engaged contemporary art fairs whether curated or non-curated, it is only through actually speaking to a gallery representative present that the price of the work can actually be revealed. Similarly, the red dot applied to the wall next to a work as a signifier of a sales transaction concluded, is also

rarely seen. Once again these can be seen as examples of how distance is created between the art work and its 'for sale' status.

Without partition walls sight lines allowed for works from multiple galleries to be seen at the same time giving way to thematic and formal relationships between the works and the presentation as a whole. It was only the constant presence of the gallerists standing / sitting in their zones that echoed the experience of viewing art in an art fair. Yet as more time was spent in the art fair they too became part of the language of exhibition, resembling gallery invigilators or museum guides.



Fig 7, view across four different gallery presentations, *Sunday* 2015

For me, all of these combined factors added up to creating an environment that felt more akin to the experience of seeing a large group show in a gallery or museum than being in an art fair. Rather than an over-arching curatorial theme linking the presentations together however as in some of the editions of *VOLTA*, what we witness with *Sunday* and *Independent* is the evidence of a curatorial investigation into what are

perceived to be the most relevant critically engaged galleries and artists at work today and the art fair being used as a platform to present a survey of that research.

My reading of *Independent* and *Sunday* is that on the one hand we witness a reduction of many of the art fair signifiers that would denote this as a place of sale, yet on the other we see an introduction of a number of the elements which reference gallery based exhibition-making. Without booth walls the works on display were released from their physical constraints and symbolic art fair associations. Without the regulation of avenues of booths visitors are also released from prescribed routes. With little in the form of physical barriers being present, we are able to obtain a proximity to the work which allows for a scrutiny not afforded within the booth format of the non-curated art. Without the prices of the works being visible and without their status as sold / unsold being known, we are able to look at the works independent of any signs of their market value. The use of fair branded interpretation materials and display mechanisms such as plinths, also refer us once again to elements used within exhibition-making. The combined effect of all of these decisions is that in *Sunday* and *Independent* I was able to engage with the artistic and symbolic qualities of the works on display while their status as objects for sale and the event as a place of trade was subsumed.

As if to distance themselves even further from the preconceptions inherent within the descriptive title 'art fair', *Sunday* and *Independent* like *VOLTA* were all conceived at the outset without this term as part of their moniker. Indeed as research shows this is a characteristic of most art fairs that are concerned with critically engaged contemporary art. By contrast, other art fairs which do not describe themselves as dealing with critically engaged contemporary art and more closely follow a retail art

fair model embed the sales function within their titles at the outset. *Affordable Art Fair*, *Buy Art Fair*, *Red Dot Art Fair* and *The Other Art Fair* to name a few leave no doubt as to the overarching purpose of the event by overtly using the language and symbols of sales transaction in their name.

However, while the impact of the decisions taken by *Independent* and *Sunday* result in a reading that sees them create distance between the event and its description as an art fair, their function as a site for sales is seen as fundamentally important by their organisers. As the case study interviews show, their decisions to follow an open-space model and to create something which strives to look more like an a gallery exhibition than an art fair are in no way bound up with an interest in hiding or denying *Independent's* function as a sales platform.

...people at Independent really want to sell what they have brought. The artists really want you to buy what they have brought. You want people to realise that this is stuff for sale.¹⁷¹

It might be considered contradictory therefore for *Independent* and *Sunday* to take the decisions that they do. However, *Independent's* positioning in the commercial gallery district of Chelsea during New York's March art fair week, at a time of year when other fairs such as *The Armory*, *VOLTA* and a number of other satellite art fairs takes place, is considered to provide a clear context as to the sales function of the event. Indeed, it is because of these overarching conditions that Flook thinks a hybrid exhibition / fair like Independent can thrive.

¹⁷¹ Flook, D, (2012), Case study transcripts, phone Interview 30th May 2012

In other places you might have to signal that this is an art fair and please come along and buy stuff in a more flag waving sort of way, [but] in that city on that street, people are aware of what you are.¹⁷²

This use of an existing sales context is echoed by *Sunday*, which in 2010, moved from taking place during Berlin's September art fair week to London's October *Frieze* week. Interestingly 2010 was the final year that Berlin's major contemporary art fair *Art Forum Berlin* took place. Perhaps therefore, without the expanded context of this major commercial event in the city, London with its increasingly significant *Frieze* art fair, was perceived as a better option for this emerging art fair. Taking place at the same time as *Frieze* therefore, *Sunday* as with *Independent*, *VOLTA* and *Sluice*, aligns itself with the contextual framing and the wider sales context provided by other contemporary art fairs in the city.

3.iii The conditions of curated art fairs: artist-led : case study 4 : *Sluice*

In 2011, one year after the emergence of *Sunday* and *Independent* we see the launch of *Sluice*. Initiated by artist Karl England and curator and writer Ben Street, *Sluice* took place in London in October in the same week as *Frieze* and *Sunday*. Motivated by, as they saw it, the lack of visibility of the artist-led sector within the world of the art fair, *Sluice* was intended to provide

¹⁷² Flook, D, (2012), Case study transcripts, phone Interview 30th May 2012

a fair that was financially accessible to artist-run projects then we could benefit from the positives that fairs possess – such as their ability to generate press and footfall, whilst creating a platform for art practice that is not necessarily art fair friendly.¹⁷³

With its focus on artist-led initiatives as opposed to commercial galleries which are the main focus of *Independent*, *Sunday* and *VOLTA*, *Sluice* emerges as a further sub-section within the curated art fair classification.

Adopting an open space rather than a booth-led approach, Karl as in the case of *Sunday* and *Independent* before, notes that the costs of participation were part of this decision, 'Walls are expensive, by not installing walls we can pass that saving on to the galleries.'¹⁷⁴ Karl also talks openly of the non-booth approach as a mechanism to create distance between *Sluice* and the definition of being traditional art fair.

We want to get away from the idea of art fairs as trade fairs, getting rid of the booths is a short hand way of visually doing this.¹⁷⁵

It is a decision taken also to add to the art viewing experience.

I think it creates a problematic viewing experience, which I think is a positive thing. Without walls one gallery pitch bleeds into another, there is a potential for a lot of visual noise, where one art work is forced into a dialogue with another artwork, often incongruously. If the galleries want to show their artists in glorious isolation they can stay in their galleries.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ England K, (2014) Case study interview email exchange

¹⁷⁴ Ibid

¹⁷⁵ Ibid

¹⁷⁶ Ibid

My own first-hand experience of the inaugural 2011 edition of *Sluice* provided testimony to the problematic viewing experience that England talks of. Without any formal demarcation devices such as booth walls, or the informal booth boundaries as provided by the grey lines on the floor at *Sunday*, it was unclear where one contribution began and the other one ended. As with *Sunday* the effect of this is that I became less aware of the individual presentations of a gallery and more aware of the combined effect produced of all of the artworks on display. Once again the impression was of a large group exhibition as opposed to an art fair as we would traditionally understand it. Without booth walls, 2D works were propped against skirting boards or other uprights such as table legs or the room's load-bearing pillars.



Fig.8 Example presentation of some of the 2D work on display at *Sluice*, 2011

Unlike *VOLTA* and *Sunday* which had standardised art fair branded information there were a variety of approaches taken to the provision of contextualising or interpretative information at *Sluice*. Some exhibitors made available postcards, business cards and

other information sources while others chose not to. In keeping with all of the critically engaged art fairs within the scope of this study however, I was not aware of any price lists presented in direct physical relation to the work. Taking place within the same week as *Frieze*, *Sluice* was again, as with *Independent* and *Sunday*, benefitting from the wider framing that this art fair brings. Additionally, whilst the website occasionally referred to *Sluice* art fair, the most frequently used logo did not, referring to it only as *Sluice*. In keeping with the other examples presented here therefore, it too sets distance from overtly describing itself as an art fair.

As with *Sunday* and *Independent*, the environment that *Sluice* generates is more akin to seeing art in an exhibition format. It too, as a result of the decisions made, has created a space where the status of the art works as objects for sale and the event itself as a place of trade is subsumed. In fact, as Karl says, for *Sluice* measures of achievement aren't defined by sales figures and therefore, the economic impact of it as an art fair is not a priority. When asked whether the decision to adopt an open space approach was led by a motivation to produce a more conducive sales environment, England is quick to dismiss this,

I have no idea. We're not against sales, and we are developing this aspect of the fair. But we strenuously tell galleries before they apply that they shouldn't participate in *Sluice* if they're looking for a direct route to the market.¹⁷⁷

Initially begun as an annual event *Sluice* has recently announced its ambition to occupy a biennial framework with a range of curatorial projects comprising exhibitions, publications, talks and events occurring in the interim.

¹⁷⁷
Ibid

As can be seen from these four case study examples a number of common themes can be recognised. In the first instance the role of the curator in some form either as advisor or art fair director is seen to act on the selection of the participants who take part in the art fair. If not entirely conceived by curators at the outset, then curators have become an intrinsic part of their design and delivery. Secondly, these fairs promote themselves as unpacking an established art fair model. The introduction of curators and curating form part of this unpacking, but also the art fair's approach to their spatial design is another element. Experimenting with the established formula of white walled booths these fairs create open-space formats or provide a hybrid condition of the two. In part the removal of walls is seen motivated by financial considerations, i.e. less walls mean less cost and thus participation in the fair can be offered more cheaply. However, the main motivator is universally described as being to create a situation where the presentation of the art work takes precedence by creating spaces that are sensitive to the specific demands of the art works to be shown. Thirdly, to a greater or lesser degree, curated art fairs also produce contextualising materials which seek to position the artists, artworks and galleries participating into a greater whole. Rather than being considered as a selection of unconnected individual participating galleries the intention is to create an overarching sense of purpose as why these artists and these artworks are being presented together here and now.

Taking these points into consideration it is clear to see how they embody some of the considerations of exhibition making including as they do, the considerations of artwork selection, presentation, interpretation, communication and context. In their unpacking of the existing format of art fairs and their signalling of their existence as being to provide a critique and an alternative, we also see how these fairs embody

tenets of Barragán's New Fairism approach. The combined effect of these approaches has been to create a series of environments where the sales motivation of the event is subsumed both theoretically and practically within a desire to create a quality art viewing experience. In doing so therefore, I argue that in the curated art fair, the artistic and symbolic qualities of the art works on display take prominence over their condition as objects for sale and at varying degrees, 'deal properly' with the relationship between money and art in the art fair context.

3.iv Curated art fairs : wider context

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, during the currency of this research period other curated art fairs have also appeared and while they do not form the main case study interviews, they provide the wider context within which the study has taken place. Their appearance throughout the period of research added evidence to my belief that the re-examination of the art fair was an ongoing phenomena. What follows therefore is a survey along a time-line basis, comprised of key moments within the curated art fair history to illustrate this proliferation.

In September 2009, *Preview Berlin* art fair which began in Berlin in 2005 and in which The International 3 participated in 2007 and 2008, announced that it was going to present a new fair concept for the 2009 edition, namely foregoing the classical fair booth construction aiming to curate the entire exhibition.¹⁷⁸

Whilst *Preview Berlin* continued until 2013, after its 2009 iteration, it returned to a spatial layout that once again recognised traditional booths as part of its format. One month later in October 2009, *Zoo Art Fair*, London, in which The International 3

¹⁷⁸ *Preview Berlin* (2009) *Preview Berlin – The Emerging Art Fair* [Online] http://www.previewberlin.de/Data/pressebilder_full/090831_PREnglish.pdf

participated in 2005, 2006 and 2007, described itself as

An event that takes on an adapted structure, bringing together over 50 contemporary arts organisations and practitioners, through a series of exhibitions, solo shows and stand presentations.¹⁷⁹ Alongside the presentations from commercial galleries were a series of specially curated exhibitions by London based independent curators and organisations such as, Rob Tufnell (who went on to direct *Sunday* fair in 2013 and 2014) and *Studio Voltaire*, as well as a section for the presentation of individual art works.

Zoo Art Fair closed after its 2009 edition and while no official press release was issued to reveal the reasons, some of the opinions recorded in the press have pointed to new developments that were occurring within *Frieze*. By gradually introducing sections within their art fair which were directed at emerging galleries for example, it was seen by some, that *Frieze* had begun to cover some of the ground previously occupied by *Zoo Art Fair*. As curator and lecturer Kit Hammonds said in a NY Times article in 2013,

But it [Zoo Art Fair] lost its viability once Frieze introduced things like The Frame, which is semi-curated and for the younger galleries, and overlapped with Zoo¹⁸⁰

As discussed later, there are other more recent examples which could be read as larger non-curated art fairs expanding onto ground occupied by the smaller satellite fairs. As explored further in Chapter Four this expansion is being read by some as one of the possible factors impacting on the sustainability and growth of curated art fairs.

¹⁷⁹ *Zoo Art Fair* (2009) *Zoo 2009 General Information* [Online]
<http://www.zooartenterprises.com/zoo2009/2009/09/zoo-2009-general-information/>

¹⁸⁰ Bronwell, G (2013) *Niche Art Fairs Carve Out A Corner Of London*, The New York Times, [Online]
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/07/arts/niche-art-fairs-carve-out-a-corner-in-london.html?_r=0

In April 2010, one year after the close of *Zoo Art Fair*, *The Economy of the Gift* took place in Liverpool. This was The International 3's first experience of being directly involved both as a participant and in the thought processes behind, the delivery of a project which from the outset sought to challenge the existing art fair format. Coming six months in advance of The International 3's first experience as curatorial coordinators of *The Manchester Contemporary*, *The Economy of the Gift* was conceived by *A Foundation* in Liverpool. Launched in 2006, *A Foundation's* remit was to turn the Greenland Street regeneration area of Liverpool into a site of visual art production and presentation. Three former industrial buildings in the area were turned into a series of exhibition and project spaces. It was here that *A Foundation* developed and presented a programme of new visual art commissions and exhibitions, *The Economy of the Gift* being one. As the press release produced for the event states,

The Economy of the Gift offers a unique experience for contemporary collectors in search of a boutique scaled art fair. It will present eight artists and eight galleries curated by Ticiana Correa and explore the idea of value in a time of market crisis.¹⁸¹

Clearly making reference in its title to Lewis Hyde's theory of the 'gift economy', this project sought to directly embed within its design and delivery a consideration of the role that the art fair plays in describing and ascribing art's values. Rather than a selection process led by commercial galleries, the eight galleries, of which The International 3 was one, were directly invited to participate by curator Ticiana Correa who had been appointed by *A Foundation*. Each gallery was then asked to suggest

¹⁸¹ A Foundation, (2009) *The Economy of the Gift*, [Online] http://afoundations.blogspot.co.uk/2010_04_01_archive.html

another international gallery with whom to partner. Through a process of discussion and debate between the two galleries and the curator Ticiana Correa each gallery then selected an artist from each other's list of gallery artists.¹⁸² These artists were then invited to make new work or to show existing work. These works were then presented across three different rooms within one of *A Foundation's* former industrial spaces under the curatorial consideration of Ticiana Correa.

Unlike the short term timescale of an art fair, *The Economy of the Gift* took place over four weeks and as such was more in keeping with an exhibition format. To further emphasise this difference, representatives from the galleries were only required to be present for the preview night instead of for its duration as would be expected at an art fair. In line with the popular presentation format of art works within a curated art fair, price labels were not present next to the works on display. The opening night of the event began with a Collector/ VIP preview event. In doing so it replicated some of the conditions of the art fair model which, across both curated and non-curated art fairs, has pre-public opening times for specifically invited guests. For *The Economy of the Gift* this Collector / VIP preview event provided the only formal point of contact between potential buyers and sellers.

The Economy of The Gift was an openly direct presentation of a conceptual re-examination of the art fair that linked a curatorial approach with the selection and presentation of galleries, artists and artworks with an ambition for sales. By titling the project such, *A Foundation* referenced the theoretical framework of 'gift economies'

¹⁸² Gallery artists is a term used within the commercial gallery sector to refer to those artists that the gallery has a representing relationship with, rather than purely an exhibiting relationship. Representing artists has a financial relationship with the gallery in that art works by represented artists are sold by galleries and then the artists receive a % from the sale on a commission basis.

and their relationship to discussions of money, value and exchange.

As critical reviews from the time of project reveal however, *The Economy of the Gift* was perceived to have only partially succeeded in these aims. As Jonathan Griffin's review for a-n reported,

What we end up with is, in fact, a rather elegant group show of eight artists who have little in common but whose work fits, superficially at least, into a cohesive exhibition.¹⁸³

while, Richard Urwin's review for Frieze.com stated,

The Economy of the Gift' does feel somewhat like an un-curated emporium of work, though it remains one rewarding to visit.¹⁸⁴

Both recognising its limitations as a curated exhibition, the reviewers were also in agreement as to the opinion that *The Economy of the Gift* was also unconvincing as an art fair. As Griffin stated, 'The Economy of the Gift ultimately fails because it is not what it says it is',¹⁸⁵ concluding his review with the thought that, 'sometimes a show can just be a show, and the empty rhetoric that appends it is best forgotten',¹⁸⁶ This was a sentiment echoed by Richard Urwin who writes,

Except for the opening weekend, when gallerists were able to interact with invited collectors, it is really more exhibition than art fair.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ Griffin, J, (2010), a-n.co.uk *The Economy of the Gift and Global Studio*, [Online] <https://www.a-n.co.uk/reviews/the-economy-of-the-gift-global-studio>

¹⁸⁴ Urwin, R (2010) Frieze.com, *The Economy of the Gift* [Online] http://www.frieze.com/shows/review/the_economy_of_the_gift/

¹⁸⁵ Ibid

¹⁸⁶ Ibid

¹⁸⁷ Ibid

From a participant point of view, our experience was also that *The Economy of the Gift* did not function successfully for us as a platform for sales as no sales enquiries were received and no sales were made. Our analysis concluded that too many of the sales signalling mechanisms had been removed to enable the event to function as a sales platform and in effect, *too much* distance had been put between the artworks and their 'for sale' status. By removing the physical points of contact between buyer and seller, *The Economy of the Gift* removed the major sales conduit present in an art fair environment. While the work was available for sale with price lists available on request, as my own direct experience of selling work has shown the selling of an art work requires much more than telling people that the work is available for sale. Enshrined within the negotiation between buyer and seller are a whole system of required and expected, spoken and unspoken, levels of communication that occur person to person as part of the process of making a sale. From my own observant participation and my participant observation within art fairs throughout the currency of this study it has been shown that purchasers very rarely confirm a sale without receiving further information about the work or the artist. These information requests most frequently come in the form of questions relating to the artists age, their C.V., their current practice, their upcoming exhibitions alongside questions about the content and form of the work on display. The lack of a constant point of contact within *The Economy of the Gift*, to articulate and advocate for the work was compounded by the fact that little in the way of contextual information about the artists and the artworks was present in the space.

Correa has chosen not to display any text on the gallery walls, even omitting the names of the works and the artists, thereby following a recent trend of allowing

art works to speak for themselves. For those that want it, though, it can be irritating not to have some indication of the artist's concept, nor to be certain whose work is in front of you.¹⁸⁸

While *The Economy of the Gift* was framed as part of the wider context of Liverpool's 2008 City of Culture status, this did not provide a wider sales context from which it could benefit such as that provided by 'fair weeks'. *The Economy of the Gift* was not therefore able to rely on a broader commercial context to help define the sales ambition of the event. Where *The Economy of the Gift* did succeed in my mind however, was in relation to the development of gallery networks, the provision of opportunities for artists to realise ambitious and newly commissioned art works that would not otherwise have been possible and in providing a platform for them to be seen by the general public. Indeed artist Geta Brătescu that was profiled by Ivan Gallery as part of the project, has recently returned to Liverpool for a major solo exhibition at Tate Liverpool. What *The Economy of the Gift* also did was contribute to the emerging and burgeoning discussion of how to appropriate and modify the existing art fair model.

Initially presented as biennial project, any subsequent editions of *The Economy of the Gift* were not able to be realised as in 2011 *A Foundation* closed, citing on its website a lack of commitment on the part of its funders as one a contributing factor.

Five months after *The Economy of the Gift* in September 2010, The International 3 was invited to begin a relationship with *The Manchester Contemporary*. Launched in 2009 the inaugural year of *The Manchester Contemporary* took the form of one floor

¹⁸⁸
Ibid

within a larger art fair called *Buy Art Fair* that was presented in the URBIS building in city-centre Manchester. *Buy Art Fair* was set up by Moorfield Media, an exhibitions and events team, whose other projects at that time included restaurant and bar trade fairs and visitor attraction events. In 2011, Moorfield Media was succeeded by Holden Media whose projects now focus on *Buy Art Fair*, *The Manchester Contemporary* and *Northern Restaurant and Bar*, a trade show for the restaurant and bar industry. In the inaugural year of *The Manchester Contemporary* participants were selected by curator Ceri Hand who has a long history of working in public sector galleries and who at that time had also recently opened her own commercial gallery in Liverpool. From 2010 to the present day, The International 3 has undertaken this role.

As a gallery that had participated in and visited a number of art fairs around the world The International 3 was aware of the emerging discussion regarding the reformulating of the art fair model. This knowledge and experience was used therefore to directly inform the decision making with regard to the design and delivery of *The Manchester Contemporary* in its second year. As The International 3's experience of participating in art fairs continues to the present day, the ongoing accrual of knowledge and experience informs each subsequent year of the fair.

Rather than merely seeking to replicate any of the models that The International 3 was aware of, at the outset there was recognition of the requirement to recognise the specifics of the context within which *The Manchester Contemporary* sat. While *Buy Art Fair* did provide a broader selling context, The International 3 was conscious that as a fair *Buy Art Fair* did not promote itself as a fair of critically engaged contemporary art. Unlike *Sunday* and *Independent* in the examples above and their symbiotic relationship with critically engaged fairs such as *Frieze*, *The Armory* and *Art*

Basel and their respective 'fair weeks' The International 3 was conscious therefore that *Buy Art Fair* could not provide the same specific framing impact for *The Manchester Contemporary*. As a gallery that had been curating and exhibiting critically engaged contemporary art for over ten years and had been engaged in making it available for sale within the region for over seven years, The International 3 was also very conscious that the market for critically engaged contemporary art outside of London was underdeveloped by the standards of the other art world cities that hosted other contemporary art fairs. In England it is widely recognised that the commercial gallery infrastructure and market for critically engaged contemporary art is predominantly located in London with smaller influential groupings of artists, galleries and collectors operating within the regions.¹⁸⁹ At the outset therefore, The International 3 was conscious that, in addition to a general audience, a mechanism was needed to also encourage specific curators and collectors of critically engaged contemporary. In addition to representatives of the company Holden Media that own the fair, a steering group was then founded including curator Kate Jesson from *Manchester Art Gallery* who had recently launched a Collectors Circle attached to *Manchester Art Gallery* and Mark Doyle, head of Collector Development for *Contemporary Art Society North*, an organisation whose remit was to encourage the development of collectors and collecting in the North West of England. Each of these roles was charged therefore with helping the fair to develop access to existing collectors of critically engaged

¹⁸⁹

Buck, L, (2004), *Market Matters, The dynamics of the contemporary art market*, Arts Council England p.66. This report recognises London as the dominant market place within the UK infrastructure for challenging contemporary art, but also notes that some other metropolitan centres such as Manchester, Liverpool, Nottingham, Bristol, Birmingham and Sheffield are actively displaying elements of an art market infrastructure. However, these centres are considered not to have the full 'complement of components...required to kick-start a viable market for challenging contemporary art'.

contemporary art as well as encouraging new collectors.

Having experienced curated art fairs as both an exhibitor and visitor, The International 3 was aware at first-hand how curated art fairs such as *Sunday, Independent* and *Sluice* were built from networks of like-minded galleries. In the first instance therefore The International 3 approached a number of galleries with whom a working relationship already existed and also asked them for recommendations of other potential exhibitors. In doing so it was The International 3's aim to bring together a group of like-minded galleries who displayed a similar ethos with regard to the art they were interested in and how they presented it. The International 3 was also interested in bringing together galleries that shared a developmental way of working with their artists, building their careers over time, rather than a retail sales relationship just based on the sale of consigned works. .

At its core, *The Manchester Contemporary* is a fair that is seeking to strengthen the market for critically engaged contemporary art in the North West and more broadly the Northern region of England. Its focus from the outset therefore has been on providing a platform not just for galleries based in the region, but for galleries based outside of the region that are interested in assisting the core aim of developing the local market. Furthermore, The International 3 considers *The Manchester Contemporary* to be a vehicle through which to highlight emerging commercial initiatives outside of London, as a means through which to articulate the potential for a more decentralised market for critically engaged contemporary art in the UK. In doing so The International 3 is seeking to provide a sales mechanism for those regionally based collectors who, anecdotally at least, only purchase art from London galleries due to a perceived lack of opportunities to purchase outside the capital. Longer term aims

are to stem the talent drain of artists from the region believing that if the local market can be built by encouraging demand, more emerging commercial initiatives will consider the region a relevant and appropriate place for them to build their businesses, and more artists who want it, can be supported commercially.

In addition to the process of exhibitor selection, which mirrors the invitational nature of both *Sunday* and *Independent*, The International 3 is also charged with designing the space within which these galleries present their artists' works. From the outset The International 3 saw it as important to create an environment that in the first instance sought to present the art works in the way most appropriate to the participating artists and gallery's intentions. Secondly The International 3 was also conscious that The Manchester Contemporary was operating within a geographic context that had a relatively under developed market for critically engaged contemporary art. Thirdly, however The International 3 also wanted *The Manchester Contemporary* to recognise and contribute to the discussion of recent developments within the art fair model.

Over the years, *The Manchester Contemporary* has sought to occupy a position somewhere in between the grid like formality of the traditional art fair layout and an entirely open space design. Aware from experience that the most purchased artworks at art fairs remain 2D works, and that for emerging collectors just at the beginning their purchasing journey 2D work is seen as a point of entry compared to video, sculpture and installation; lack of wall space in the fair could provide a barrier to building collector audiences. Rather than adopting an 'off the peg' trade fair shell scheme however, *The Manchester Contemporary* now routinely appoints a team of joiners and installation technicians familiar with the process of public gallery exhibition design and

build. With experience of working within some of the region's most prestigious public sector galleries, the strategies that they adopt produce a museum quality construction and finish. Mirroring Darren Flook's comments about 'museum quality' walls, The International is also seeking to create an environment that replicates the quality of presentation spaces that one might find in a public gallery or museum.



Fig .9 The Manchester Contemporary 2015, pre-installation photo showing the combination of 2 and 3 walled booths.

In positioning exhibitors within the floorplan The International 3 takes into consideration what work they are going to be showing, and aims to create the opportunity for formal and thematic dialogues to be read between the artworks on display. By reducing the number of three walled booths and increasing the number of two walled booths sight lines are opened up across the whole space and by providing open spaces within the design, there are opportunities for larger works to be displayed. In researching and choosing which galleries The International 3 wishes to invite, in designing the space within which they will present work, in trying to create relationships and narratives between the works, The Manchester Contemporary

demonstrates its curatorial engagement. However, as with the other curated art fairs that form the case study examples, The International 3 does not choose to describe *The Manchester Contemporary* as a curated exhibition, instead like the other case study curated art fairs presented earlier in this Chapter, The International 3 considers the fair to be a curated platform. In support of this position, The International 3 does not call itself the curators of the art fair instead the term curatorial coordinator was generated to describe this work.

In the time-line of the emergence of the curated art fair, in the same year as A Foundation's closure, and The International 3's engagement with *The Manchester Contemporary*, we see in the space of six months, the emergence of *Spring-Break*, described as a curator-driven art fair and in addition to *Sluice*, three other curated art fairs that took an open space approach, namely, *Fruit, Flowers and Clouds*, *NADA Hudson* and *CAVE*.

In March 2011 the inaugural edition of *Spring-Break* took place in New York in the same week as *The Armory*, *VOLTA (New York)*, *Independent* and a number of other satellite art fairs. Here rather than curators selecting the participants, the *Spring Break* founders select curators to participate in the fair. The selected curators then present curated projects defined by an overarching theme. Describing itself as offering a 'break' from the typical art fair model,

Spring-Break Art Show aims to turn observation into interaction and reimagine the trade show platform as an opportune playground, instead, of the curator's exhibition ideal.¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ *Spring Break Art Show*, (no date), About, [Online] <http://www.springbreakartshow.com/about/>

Two months later in May 2011, *Fruit, Flowers and Clouds* provided a promising development in the discussion surrounding the evolution of the curated open space art fair. A project set up by the magazine, *Spike Art Quarterly*, *Fruit Flowers and Clouds*, took place within the *Museum of Applied Arts*, a public sector gallery in Vienna. Taking the site of the art fair directly inside the critically engaged space of the museum, where traditionally the commensuration of art with its price is held at a distance, for me added to my argument that the curated art fair had become part of the provenance making mechanism for artists and art works. By deciding to accept the fair within the site of the Museum, the authority and credibility of the institution became part of the identity of the fair.

As in the case of the inaugural *VOLTA* (New York), *Fruit Flowers and Clouds* selected specific artists to participate and by attachment the galleries that represented them. The importance of the artist selection over gallery selection to the concept of the fair was signalled subtly through physical and virtual signage. Within the booth signage at *VOLTA* (New York), the name of the artist is listed above and in a larger sized font than the name of the gallery on the name boards that accompany each stand. On the website of *Fruit, Flowers and Clouds* the artist's name is positioned above the name of their representing gallery. In contrast to how gallery and artists are usually listed within art fairs, these moves can be read as another element in the dismantling of an inherited format. In terms of its presentation format, *Fruit Flowers and Clouds* echoed the ambition of both *Sunday* and *Independent* to provide a,

more open exhibition-like environment, one that complements the work, and

provides an ideal atmosphere for viewers, collectors, and gallery owners alike

[where] Art is uncompromisingly placed in the foreground.¹⁹¹

As shown earlier with *Independent* before them, *Fruit, Flowers and Clouds* sought to strip back what they perceived as all of the unnecessary elements of the pre-existing art fair model,

Fruits, Flowers, and Clouds is trim, managing to do without the ritualistic additions of conventional (sic) fairs, which often give the impression that they want to legitimise something: trivial panel discussions between people randomly thrown together, end-less (sic) series of lectures on arbitrary topics, inconsequential but voluminous catalogues or VIP receptions sorted into absurd hierarchies.¹⁹²

Although signalled on its website as being an annual event, the second *Fruit, Flowers and Clouds* is yet to take place.

Two months later in July 2011, *NADA Hudson* takes place for the first time, with its second and final incarnation taking place in 2012. A project of the *NADA* network which delivers annual art fairs in Cologne, Miami and New York and operates a network structure, *NADA Hudson* announced itself as 'not an art fair, but rather site-specific project for the New Art Dealers Alliance.'¹⁹³ It is here that for the first time that I noted the use of the description 'not an art fair' within the context of projects that were being launched by organisations that also ran art fairs. *Sluice* and its descriptions of its

¹⁹¹ *Fruit Flowers and Clouds*, (no date), [Online] <http://2011.fruitsflowersandclouds.at>

¹⁹² Ibid

¹⁹³ Basilica Hudson, (2011) *New Art Dealers Alliance (NADA) Hudson* [Online] <http://basilicahudson.com/new-art-dealers-alliance-nada-hudson/>

project, *Exchange Rate: The Bushwick Expo* (described later), also provides another example of this.

Taking place in the semi-rural location of Hudson north of New York state, *NADA Hudson*, invited galleries to present single works of art or site-specific projects. Without booths and with varying degrees of restrictions as to what could be used as hanging mechanisms (no holes could be drilled into the walls for example), the participating galleries were reported as having found inventive ways to present their work with,

Graham Gallery built a large crate to hang paintings on. West Street Gallery placed a series of small-scale sculptures by Sam Anderson in tidy rows on the floor...Jack Hanley found pre-existing holes in the wall (there were plenty) to hang two paintings by Amy Yao.¹⁹⁴

While choosing to describe itself as 'not' an art fair, work was available for sale. In this instance therefore, *NADA Hudson* brought to mind the sales association that the term art fair brings yet also allowed a freedom from the preconceptions and potential restrictions associated with the term. In defining themselves as 'not art fairs', they bring into currency the sales function of the art fair by its absence, once again creating symbolic distance between the event and its commercial function.

In 2012 *CAVE* launched in Liverpool and like *Sluice*, which emerged a year before it, can also be described as part of the sub-section of artist-led curated art fairs. Initiated by artists Flis Mitchell and Kevin Hunt, rather than artist-led organisations as in the case of *Sluice*, *CAVE* was a platform for artists to directly present and sell their work to the public themselves. Selected from a process of research and

¹⁹⁴ Miller, M.H. (2011) Observer.com *NADA Hudson Sent the Art World Up the River* [Online] <http://observer.com/2011/08/nada-hudson-sent-the-art-world-up-the-river/>

recommendation, forty five artists were given the opportunity to participate without any charge to take part, and being able to take 100% of the sale price received for the work. From the outset therefore *CAVE* was reconfiguring the economic relationship that galleries and artists have to art fairs.¹⁹⁵ The specific criteria was for unrepresented artists, i.e. those without any commercial gallery agency. *CAVE* took place over four days in Liverpool at the same time as the Liverpool Biennial. The event's initiators, as with the fairs described above, took advantage of a broader context at play and to benefit from the higher level of press and public attention on the city at that time. While Liverpool Biennial is not a selling event, it does focus on critically engaged contemporary art and therefore *CAVE* was also able to use this wider context to help define their objectives in relation to it. Launched with the strapline, '*Who's ready for a new kind of art-fair?*' it was clear from the various press published in the run up to the launch, that *CAVE's* conceivers distinguished it from other art-fairs not just through the spatial layout, but by a negation of a number of the infrastructural elements that constituted, as they saw it, the defining factors of other art-fairs i.e. no galleries, no commission taken from artists' sales, no fees to take part and no intermediary between the artwork and the purchaser.¹⁹⁶ As my own experience of visiting *CAVE* reveals, like *The Economy of the Gift*, it was successful in providing an interesting and important opportunity to platform new developments in contemporary art and added to the debate concerning the reformulating of the art fair format. However as with *The*

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While each art fair differs in terms of the level, there is generally a charge for exhibitors to take part. Similarly, depending on the specifics of their relationship, artists receive a share of the sale price received from sales at an art fair with the gallery / organisation that is presenting them.

¹⁹⁶

CAVE, (2012), *Who's ready for a new kind of art fair?* [Online]
<https://www.facebook.com/CAVEartfair/posts/172560566212531>

Economy of the Gift, CAVE's negation of some of the recognised sales transaction signifies meant that in my mind, it operated less successfully as a sales platform.

In an industrial unit close to the docks areas of Liverpool, we were met by a yellow t-shirted person who asked us to self-determine our 'status' for the evening. Were we artists / collectors / public sector or press? Once decided a corresponding colour of thread holding two brass rings was placed on our wrists. We were then told that this is an artists' work and that one of the hoped-for by products was to ease networking and communication between the various levels of attendees.

Once inside the room it was apparent that this was not a curated exhibition in the sense of an overarching theme or area of investigation. There was very little space between one work and the next and it wasn't clear where one artists work ended and another began. Again as with *Sunday* and *Sluice* there was a definite sense of an attempt to generate an impact from the combined effect of the artworks presented in the room rather than present a series of individual presentations.



Fig. 10. CAVE art fair, 2012, view across the space

When I asked for a price list, I was told that one was available from the main desk, but there was no obvious indication of this and when I got there it wasn't yet ready to view. With one of the motivations for the event being 'the demystification of contemporary art and art-buying' the lack of an obvious price list or sales transaction process seemed incongruous.¹⁹⁷ If it hadn't been for the pre-framing of the event within press and publicity that *CAVE* was an experiment with the art fair model it would have been difficult to tell that the art work here was actually available for sale. *CAVE* represented where I thought the evolution of the art-fair model may end up; no booths, no traditional art-fair characteristics but a clear focus on the artist and the presentation of their work in an unmediated context. Indeed, *CAVE* did deliver all of these conditions and delivered them well and needs to be commended for the fact that it did provide an opportunity to access a really interesting and engaging body of work by new and relatively underexposed emerging artists. However, the mechanism by which how to purchase work was not clear. As a review written by Mark Doyle (Head of Collector Development for Contemporary Art Society North West) reveals, as with *The Economy of the Gift* three years earlier *CAVE* did not fulfil its ambition as being a platform for sales,

However, despite the best intentions of the organisers and the undoubted quality of some of the work, I feel *CAVE* fell some way short of creating an environment conducive to maximising sales.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ Mitchell, F (2012), a-n.co.uk, *CAVE: "We have to offer something different"*, a-n, [Online] <https://www.a-n.co.uk/news/cave-art-fair-we-have-to-offer-something-different>

¹⁹⁸ Doyle, M (2012), Axisweb.org, *CAVE art fair – by Mark Doyle*, Axisweb, [Online] www.axisweb.org/features/news-and-views/in-focus/cave-art-fair

The fact that the artists themselves were not there or anyone else obviously there to represent or advocate for the work, was compounded by the lack of readily available contextual material or access to prices. As with *The Economy of the Gift* before it, *CAVE* demonstrated to me how when *too* much distance is created between the art object and its status as an art work for sale then the possibility for sales can be compromised. While announcing its intention to continue beyond its inaugural year, *CAVE* also concluded after its first edition.

Alongside *CAVE*, 2012 also saw the launch of *Poppositions* in Brussels. Taking place at the same time as city's larger and much longer established *Art Brussels* art fair, *Poppositions* once again defined itself in relation to an existing sales platform. From an initial modest scale of seven participating organisations in its inaugural year, the last three years has seen *Poppositions* grow both in scale and in mission. Whilst the 2012 information entry in its online archive is limited in terms of statement of intent, we are able to see how year on year, *Poppositions* has sought to further define itself as an experiment with the traditional art fair model. Its current website describes *Poppositions* as,

Conceived as an experiment with the art fair format, *POPPOSITIONS* is an assembly of galleries and hybrid art spaces... POPPOSITIONS aims to occupy a critical position during Art Brussels.... POPPOSITIONS is boasting a disruptive fair model catching visitors off-guard. It challenges the white cube format to show cultural innovation in a curated show¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ *Poppositions*, (2015), *Poppositions.com Poppositions 2015* [Online] [Accessed 18th September 2015] www.poppositions.com

As with the economic motivations of the curated art fairs described above *Poppositions* also seeks to create an event that is financially accessible to its potential participants requiring only a Euro200 contribution. However, *Poppositions* sees its role not just to critique the delivery infrastructure or physical layout of the traditional art fair, rather its motivation have wider concerns. The description of the agenda for *Poppositions* 2015 was set around three key aims, 'Let's Invent a New Economy', 'Let's Turn Art Fairs into Artistic Laboratories' and 'Let's Get Together'.²⁰⁰ This concern to define their event as part of the wider dialogue which seeks to 'valorise new experimental and ingenious economies' as well as new collaborative approaches to the dissemination and sale of art within the market, sites *Poppositions* within an economic as well as within a theoretical framework.²⁰¹ It also sites *Poppositions* within a newly emerging current within art fairs. Mentioned in the introduction and developed further in Chapter Four, in the wake of the curated art fair, we are now witnessing the emergence of new models which explicitly indicate their intention to find new ways to generate value in the exchange of art works.

From the curated art fairs listed above, *Independent*, *Sunday*, *Poppositions*, *The Manchester Contemporary* and *Sluice* have all continued to the present day. From the evidence available it isn't possible to conclusively conclude why the other fairs listed above have not continued, however it is possible to suggest a number of potential causal factors. Firstly, an imbalance in the relationship between curatorial and

²⁰⁰ *Poppositions*, (2015) *Poppositions.com Poppositions 2015*[Online] [Accessed 18th September 2015] <http://www.poppositions.com/#!currentedition/c1lb7>

²⁰¹ *Poppositions*, (2015) *Poppositions.com Poppositions 2015*[Online] [Accessed 18th September 2015] <http://www.poppositions.com/#!manifesto/citc>

commercial may well be part of the answer. In creating too much distance between the art works and their financial value, or by dealing with the relationship between art and money 'too properly' these events could be seen as sitting uncomfortably between being an exhibition and a sales arena. Consequently it is possible that they may have been unable to attract significant sales to guarantee the return of exhibitors, investors or funders. If sales are part of the ambition of the event but not achieved then galleries or artists might be less inclined to participate again and consequently the fair will struggle to obtain the financial means to continue. A second factor could lie in the strength that being a satellite to a larger non-curated art fair brings. By occurring at the same time, satellite art fairs are able to benefit from the audiences, publicity and framing that these larger events draw to a city at a particular point in time. As a consequence they are able to attract exhibitors who also want to be in close proximity to the other art fairs and the benefits that they bring. In this context satellite art fairs are also able to develop an individual identity for themselves in relation to what else is on offer. In the examples of the case studies of *VOLTA*, *Sluice*, *Independent* and *Sunday*, all four of these fairs sit within the broader context of Basel, London or New York fair week, while *Poppositions* sits alongside *Art Brussels*. In some of other curatorial endeavours listed above which have ceased to exist, the lack of a broader art fair context can be recognised such as in the examples of *CAVE*, *Fruit Flowers and Clouds*, *NADA Hudson* and *The Economy of the Gift*.

As this Chapter has shown, from 2004 until 2012 I witnessed the regular appearance of new art fairs seeking to address the art fair model. It is of marked importance therefore that unlike the previous period, in the last few years I have seen a notable reduction in their appearance. The most recent indication of a new iteration

of the curated art fair model is the form of 'Section 106' which aims in December 2016 in Miami, to create a 'World Expo type building', as a temporary structure to house 13 galleries who will 'share a single exhibition space and engage in a dynamic collaboration with a guest curator'.²⁰² While not using the term art fair specifically within the descriptions of the event in their mission statement, the project is embedded within a discussion concerning the reformulating of the art fair model. Section 106's April 2014 panel discussion titled, *New Frontiers for the Art Fair Format* for example, provided the context for a conversation about the current format of art fairs and to discuss what Section 106, 'can bring to the table?'²⁰³ Additionally, depending on which exact date that the project is planning to take place, there may also be a consideration of the additional framing that can occur as a result of Miami's December art fair week.

Where the curated art fair does continue however, it continues to thrive, shifting and adapting its model or expanding geographically. In 2014 for example, *Independent* developed a second project in New York called *Independent Projects* and recently announced that in addition to its annual March art fair in New York, it will add a second iteration of the art fair in Brussels from 2016. *The Manchester Contemporary* continues to grow in terms of exhibitor demand with the 2015 edition having presented its biggest exhibitor list to date. *Sluice* returns in 2015 with a biennial format as an art fair and a range of other projects that will take place in the intervening

²⁰² Section 106 Project (no date), *About: Mission Statement* [Online] [Accessed 3rd October 2015] <https://section106project.wordpress.com/about/>

²⁰³ Section 106 Project (2014), *New Frontiers for the Art Fair Format* [Online] [Accessed 3rd October 2015] <https://section106project.wordpress.com/2014/04/11/new-frontiers-for-the-art-fair-format/>

period, *VOLTA* continues with its Basel and New York iterations and *Sunday* returns in 2015 with a revised organising committee and application process.

As can be seen from the evidence provided in Chapter Two and Three, the role of the curator within art fairs has been present to a greater or lesser degree since the launch of *Kunstmarkt Köln* in 1967. Within Chapter Two we saw how this role has been charged with expanding the cultural offer of the non-curated art fair, through year on year increases in the curated sections of the fair. Here in Chapter Three, we see how the curatorial role has been engaged in the redefining the art fair model by taking apart an inherited format, to bring into use new operational models. Across my art fair classifications the introduction of the curatorial role can be read as being driven by multiple motivators, from marketing considerations which seek to broaden audience, increase footfall and ticket sales, to the attempt to evolve the art fair into a better viewing experience for contemporary art and through a redefinition of the architecture, help reduce the prohibitive costs of art fair participation in a recession.

With regard to this last point, if we take *Preview Berlin* and *Sunday Berlin's 2009* announcement of their ambition for a booth-less fair as the starting point of the beginnings of the idea of an open-space art fair, it is interesting to see that this corresponds with the onset of the most recent period of economic downturn which began in late 2008. As articles such as the previously mentioned, *The New Small* written by Steve Kaplan in 1994 shows, each period of recession presents its own responsive examples. In this article Kaplan articulates how the New York gallery scene of the early 90's began to respond to the impacts of the recession, with galleries being set up in people's homes and fairs in hotels, which as we saw earlier, provided the conditions for the emergence of the *Gramercy International Art Fair*. In addition to the

motivations above therefore, we can also read the ongoing emergence of the curated art fair as a necessary response to less buoyant market conditions. As Darren Flook in our 2012 interview said,

The art-fair model works brilliantly in a boom. If you are doing lots of shopping then a shopping mall works, it's the place to be, but if you are not doing any shopping then there is something a bit depressing about shopping malls.

Because the market was slower we felt that we can rethink things a bit²⁰⁴

If as my research has recognised, a slow-down in the appearance of these reduced cost models is taking place, then what does this say about the current and future economic state of the art market? and what are the other conditions that might be impacting or impeding the growth and sustainability of curated art fairs. In the Chapter that follows, I explore some of the possible causal links as well as pointing to some of the new initiatives just starting to appear in their place.

²⁰⁴ Flook, D, (2012), Case study transcripts, phone Interview 30th May 2012

Chapter 4: A consideration of the impact of art fair expansion and diversification

While the lack of more recent examples suggests that the curated art fair can no longer be seen as an ongoing phenomena, one of the areas where we are seeing ongoing growth in the art fair landscape, is with regard to non-curated art fairs and their curatorial expansion. The first part of this Chapter therefore illustrates some of these developments in more detail. In doing so I illustrate how the art fair landscape in which curated art fairs sit is changing and consider if and how these changes might be contributing to the lack of new curated art fair models appearing.

4.i Curatorial expansion of non-curated art fairs

As has been previously shown, curated activity has become an increasingly regular feature of non-curated art fairs taking the form of talks, debates and on and off site specially commissioned programmes. For the most part this activity has been, as described earlier, delineated within their own curated sections such as *Frieze Projects* in *Frieze* art fair and *Unlimited* in *Art Basel*. However what the 2014 edition of *Frieze* showed was a repositioning of curatorial activity within the main sales function of the fair rather than within a specifically defined non-profit section. In 2014 *Frieze* introduced *Frieze Live*. Rather than being framed by and in the not-for-profit *Frieze Projects* section of the fair, the six artists and galleries selected for *Frieze Live* presented their performative works within the commercial gallery booth section of the fair. The works took place either on the booths themselves or site-specifically within spaces around the fair. Perhaps in anticipation of the commercial 'loss' they might make by presenting what can be described as 'sales-challenging work', the galleries selected to participate in *Frieze Live* were not required to pay a booth fee.

Here we find an interesting point of development and convergence. Whereas previously live works had been defined within their own non-profit, non-commercial section, *Frieze Projects*, in 2014 they are given a position within the selling area of the fair. No longer provided, as detractors might say, as a programme of entertainment for the visitors to dip in and out of – this activity was rooted within the fair as a whole. In providing a platform for what can be seen as less commercially viable art forms, *Frieze* is adapting the art fair model to make space for and better represent the breadth of art forms that constitute contemporary art today. By presenting this within the main sales function of the fair as opposed to within parallel non-profit programming, *Frieze* is also recognising the broad definition of what is available for sale in the market place. Recognising the argument presented earlier regarding marketing motivators and the ‘economy of experience’, this ongoing introduction of new elements could also be seen as a way to reinvigorate and retain audience interest in the art fair year on year.

While participation in the *Frieze Live* section was again decided by a selection committee of commercial galleries it also had curator Nicola Lees as advisor.²⁰⁵ Formerly Senior Curator at Serpentine gallery, London, Nicola Lees is also the curator of *Frieze Foundation* that produces the *Frieze Projects* section of the fair. Here therefore we see an example of the curator acting upon the selection of presentations in the commercial sections of the art fair.

²⁰⁵ *Frieze*, (2014), Friezelondon.com, FAQ's [Online] <http://friezelondon.com/about/>
 The 2014 selection committee comprised of Marcia Fortes, Galeria Fortes Vilaça, São Paulo, Cornelia Grassi, greengrassi, London, Carol Greene, Greene Naftali, New York, Philomene Magers, Sprüth Magers Berlin London, Niklas Svennung, Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris, Gigiotto del Vecchio, Supportico Lopez, Berlin, Nicky Verber, Herald St, London.

When *Frieze* launched its New York edition in 2012, it divided its participating galleries into two sections, *Main* and *Frame*. Described as allowing, ‘...visitors and collectors to see work by artists who have not previously benefitted from an international platform to show their work,’ participants were selected on the basis of solo artists presentations with selection being advised by curators Cecilia Alemani and Rodrigo Moura.²⁰⁶ In 2015 *Frieze* (New York) also introduced an additional section in the form of *Spotlight*. Curated by independent curator, editor and writer Adriano Pedrosa this section of the fair was dedicated to solo artists’ presentations with a special focus on work made after 1960. Here along with *Frieze Live* at *Frieze* (London), we see additional examples of how the role of the curator is also acting upon gallery selection within the main body of fairs and not just within sections specifically framed as non-profit.

By introducing additional sections in their fair and by opening up to represent a wider range of artists’ production, expanding not only the fair’s presentation capacity but also its appropriateness for more artists and more galleries, *Frieze* is adding to an already expansive list of existing opportunities which galleries can choose from in terms of art fair participation. By employing curators to guide and select the content for these new sections, *Frieze* is giving its fairs a competitive edge. Recognising the critical value that can be conferred upon artists and artworks that are selected to participate in these new curated sections means that there will be strong demand from

²⁰⁶ *Frieze New York*, (2012) freizenewyork.com, *Frieze New York 2012: Participating Galleries Announced* [Online] [Accessed 16th August 2015] <http://friezenewyork.com/press/frieze-new-york-participating-galleries-announced/>

galleries wanting to participate. As a result curated art fairs are brought into competition with larger art fairs with regard to potential participants.

The 2014 edition of *Frieze* (London), also showed other changes to its model which were reported on in press at the time. For example, some of the architectural choices and booth layouts for 2014 created a fair with a more open-space design. While white walled booths were still the main *modus-operandi*, there was a definite sense of less uniformity with many booths having just two walls, walls of different sizes and configurations, leading to more open spaces between booths and less of the corridors and avenues which had been prevalent in previous years.

A grand design overall made the big tent much easier to navigate. It radically transformed the mood in the aisles, and, according to the dealers artnet News spoke to, had a positive impact on sales.²⁰⁷

Also evident from the 2014 edition of *Frieze* was a greater presence of a curatorial approach by the participating commercial galleries with regard to the work presented on their booths, with one and two artist presentations and artists' projects in the form of whole booth installations having a strong presence. The overall impression of the 2014 edition of *Frieze* was that booths were pared back allowing for the work presented to be read much more clearly with more space to appreciate them and their relationships to each other. The reduction of the three walled white box architecture

²⁰⁷ Forbes A and Milliard, C (2014), artnet news, *Europe's 10 Best Art Fairs in 2014*, [Online] [Accessed 12th September 2015] <https://news.artnet.com/market/europes-10-best-art-fairs-in-2014-197412>

meant that sightlines were made possible between and across booths allowing for interesting correlations and juxtapositions to arise between works. It is an observation echoed by JJ Charlesworth for *Artnet.com*, who reported

That shift—from looking like you’re selling a bunch of stuff at a fair, to
“curating” or “installing” is everywhere.²⁰⁸

As personally observed, this approach to the presentation of work on a booth allows for it to have a greater coherence and sense of purpose as to why the work is there. The converse of this is regularly cited as part of the problem with viewing work at art fairs, i.e. works are taken out of the context of an artists practice and no obvious sense of a relationship between the works on display other than their presentation for the consideration of sale. By presenting what JJ Charlesworth calls, ‘gallery-style’ shows, there is a sense that galleries are seeking to better replicate how they approach the presentation of work in their gallery, enabling the booth to be seen as an extension of their exhibition programme. As Charlesworth sees,

...it certainly suggests that the first business of being at an art fair is no longer
just selling your wares; the first business is demonstrating your credibility to the
crowds of collectors who attend.²⁰⁹

By repositioning the role of the curator to occupy positions across the fairs, by opening up its display spaces and with a more obvious curatorial approach to the presentation of the sales booths within the fair it appeared, from my experience, that *Frieze 2014*

²⁰⁸ Charlesworth JJ (2014) artnet news, *Frieze London, Behave !*, Artnet.com, [Online]
<http://news.artnet.com/art-world/frieze-london-behave-133706>

²⁰⁹ Ibid

was advancing towards a more overarching curatorial condition as exemplified with curated art fairs.

4.ii Non-curated art fairs : non-profits and emerging galleries.

In addition to expanding to include art forms that might be considered as non-commercial in nature, non-curated art fairs are also increasingly recognising within their fairs organisations whose structures are defined as non-commercial. In 2014, *Frieze* (New York) gave free booth spaces to three New York based not for profit organisations, White Columns, Artists' Space and The Artists' Institute. In 2015 *The Armory* introduced a specific *Not for Profit* section with eight organisations taking part, three of which were from the UK, *ICA* (Institute of Contemporary Art) and *Whitechapel Gallery* from London along with *Glasgow International* from Glasgow and while not specifically within the site of the art fair itself, *Art Basel* in 2014 launched a new initiative targeted exclusively at non-profits. Taking the form of a partnership between *Art Basel* and the crowdfunding platform Kickstarter, non-commercial organisations are able to apply for support to realise new projects. Taking the form of a juried competition, the successful projects are then promoted by *Art Basel* to its audience and by Kickstarter to its community.

With the introduction into *Frieze* (New York) of *Frame* a section to galleries under 8 years old and the introduction of *The Armory's* section for galleries under 10 years old, what we see are increasing opportunities for emerging galleries to participate in the larger art fairs.

Non-profit organisations are one of the types of organisations that curated art fairs support and emerging galleries have traditionally been the target market for

curated art fairs and so in the examples above we see how the expansion of non-curated art fairs could lead to an increasingly competitive market for art fair participants.

4.iii Non-curated art fairs and curated art fairs in closer orbit.

In addition to the new positioning of curators in non-curated art fairs, the introduction of new sections and the increased presence of non-commercial organisations, the following examples show how some non-curated art fairs are also developing closer operational relationships with curated art fairs by acquiring them, starting their own or developing co-promotion partnerships.

In 2007, Merchandise Mart Properties Inc. (MMPI), the company that owns *The Armory* also purchased *VOLTA* art fairs in Basel and New York. Whilst *VOLTA* has retained a separate staff team, selection committee, location and ethos, it has over time moved increasingly closer in operational terms to its business relative. Year on year marketing has increasingly emphasised the relationship between the two fairs with the introduction of shuttle buses between the two evidencing an audience sharing mechanism in place. In a press announcement made 13th October 2014, this proximity was further exemplified when *VOLTA* (New York) signalled its plan to obtain closer geographic proximity to *The Armory*. Moving into a location directly next to *The Armory* at Pier 90 with a covered walkway physically linking the two spaces Amanda Coulson states this is,

...levelling the playing field and giving our galleries even better visibility and access to the crossover crowds already attending both fairs.²¹⁰

In 2014 Paris art fair *FIAC* art fair opened the first edition of *OFF (icielle)*, which in its press releases and in published press was called the 'official FIAC satellite fair'.²¹¹ Perceived by some as 'as an attempt to eliminate smaller endeavors (sic)' the launch of *OFF(icielle)* was also perceived by some as part of the reason why one of the previously existing Paris satellite art fairs, *Cutlog* didn't take place in 2014.²¹² As *Cutlog* director Bruno Hadjadj explains, 'All the venues potentially available are booked up by FIAC, which is supported by the town hall and the ministry'.²¹³ In this view, *FIAC*'s introduction of *OFF(icielle)* is seen to be reducing competitors in a market place which is already competing for participants and audience. As Bruno Hadjadj continues, 'It's a shame...everybody agrees that the main fairs' selections don't represent the international scene, they represent the market'.²¹⁴ It is a claim however, denied by *OFF(icielle)* director Jennifer Flay who, in the same article argues that, 'Our goal has never been to eliminate the presence of other fairs taking place in Paris during the contemporary art week', seeing the benefits of the additional activity that takes place

²¹⁰ VOLTA NY (2014), Press Release received by email newsletter 15th October 2014

²¹¹ OFF(icielle) press release, art-agenda, [Online] <http://www.art-agenda.com/shows/launch-of-officielle-fiac%E2%80%99s-official-satellite/> and artnet news *FIAC Launches and Official Satellite Fair* [Online] [Accessed 16th April 2014] <https://news.artnet.com/market/fiac-launches-an-official-satellite-fair-10570>

²¹² Milliard, C, (2014), artnetnews *What Future for FIAC's satellite fairs*, artnet [Online] [Accessed 10th October 2014] <http://news.artnet.com/market/what-future-for-fiacs-satellite-fairs-103978>

²¹³ Ibid

²¹⁴ Ibid

during *FIAC* week instead as evidence, 'of the health and vitality of the French and Parisian art scene'.²¹⁵

With the initiation of new satellite art fairs by non-curated art fairs as in the case of *(OFF) icielle* we see another example of the increase in the number of opportunities for galleries to take part in or in relation to larger more established art fairs. With its relationship to the larger *FIAC* art fair, *(OFF)icielle* can offer participating galleries the potential for larger audience numbers as well as access to the main fair's audiences of curators, critics and collectors. When considering which fairs to participate in therefore, fairs such as *(OFF) iceille* will be seen by galleries as offering the potential for a better value for money ratio.

4.iv Virtual Competition

If the above provide examples of how competition for potential participants in the market place could be seen to be impacting on the sustainability of the curated art fair, the appearance of virtual art fair platforms must also be registered. In the last five years we see the emergence of a number of projects which seek to develop a virtual equivalent of the physical space of the art fair. *VIP* art fair which launched in January 2011 can be described as the first of such online fairs. Conceived by James and Jane Cohan owners of James Cohan Gallery in New York, and Jonas and Alessandra Almgren, Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, *VIP* developed as James Cohan states, as a reaction to the economic slowdown,

²¹⁵ Ibid

economic depressions tend to encourage ingenuity and during the downturn
we looked at the internet to expand business.²¹⁶

As in the example of some of the curated art fair examples above, participation in *VIP* was in the first year by invitation only. Whilst booth fees were still incurred, galleries did not need to incur other associated art fair costs.

The cost of the booth – from \$3,000 to \$20,000, the price of four
advertisements in a magazine – was a fraction of a normal art fair, and there
were no shipping, insurance, lighting, staff travel or hotel bills to consider.²¹⁷

The fair took place exclusively on line from 22-30 January and like at a physical art fair, an online grid-map of galleries acted as a plan. Clicking on one of the galleries took the viewer to a collection of artworks being presented by that gallery. A size guide was provided incorporating the image of a human figure against which the work could be scaled. Additional contextual information such as artists' biographic details and gallery background could also be accessed. However while access to this stage was free of charge, for anyone wishing to make further enquiries as to price or availability of the work for example, it was necessary to obtain a VIP pass at a cost of between \$20 - \$100 depending on which day and for how long accessed was required. The plan was then for the communication with dealers to take place via a system of instant messaging, phone or via Skype. Whilst the initial edition of *VIP* attracted over 130 galleries with many of the world's top dealers such as White Cube, David Zwirner and Gagosian

²¹⁶ Gleadell, C. (2011) telegraph.co.uk *VIP Art Fair: Welcome to the virtual art fair*, The Telegraph [Online] <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/artsales/8264807/VIP-Art-Fair-Welcome-to-the-virtual-art-fair.html>

²¹⁷ Ibid

taking part, much of the feedback from galleries and from the fair's audience of collectors was for the most part reported as being negative. Technical errors leading to interruptions and in some cases failure of some of the functionality of the online service led to lower than expected sales. As Alissa Friedman of Salon 94 gallery said,

It wasn't as successful as we'd hoped....Most of the sales at a fair happen in the opening weekend. The technical faults sapped all the energy out of it. Losing the live chat made the fair function like a website.²¹⁸

After a second poorly received edition of the fair in 2012, as this title of a *Forbes.com* article conveys 'VIP Art Fair Bombs Again: A Lesson in Art Marketing and Online Sales', the fair has not yet reappeared.²¹⁹ As gallerist David Zwirner said,

The fair was unfortunately a waste of time for us this year. We didn't have any significant traffic in the booth, nor did we meet new collectors. I'm uncertain this format will work moving forward.²²⁰

Indeed, no virtual art fair of the same format / intention has followed in *VIP's* footsteps, instead what we have witnessed is a rise in the number of online websites such as *Paddle 8*, *Artsy.net* and *Artspace.com* which provide a variety of functions for a variety of users. Galleries can upload an inventory of art work available for sale and

²¹⁸ Reyburn S (2011), Bloomberg.com *World's First Online Art Fair Draws Fire as Top Works Go Unsold* Bloomberg Business [Online] <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2011-02-01/world-s-first-online-art-fair-draws-fire-from-galleries-as-works-languish>

²¹⁹ Esman Abigail R (2012), *Forbes.com VIP Artfair Bombs Again: A Lesson in Art Marketing and Online Sales* Forbes [Online] <http://www.forbes.com/sites/abigailsesman/2012/02/14/vip-artfair-bombs-again-a-lesson-in-art-marketing-and-online-sales/>

²²⁰ Reyburn S (2011), Bloomberg.com *World's First Online Art Fair Draws Fire as Top Works Go Unsold* Bloomberg Business [Online] <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2011-02-01/world-s-first-online-art-fair-draws-fire-from-galleries-as-works-languish>

collectors can access it to make purchases either directly through the site itself, or by being directed to the gallery representing that work. Additionally this website also provides an auction function with catalogues of works being advertised for sale during specific time durations, following the format of physical auctions. While operating throughout the year as independent businesses, increasingly these online platforms are being used by physical art fairs to extend their audience and collector reach, providing as Eileen Kinsella's states, a 'virtual complement'.²²¹ Recent examples of such pairings include the 2015 editions of *The Armory* and *ARCO* who have both used *Artsy.net* to run parallel to their fairs. Once again as with the *VIP* model, galleries upload images and details of the works that they have available at the fair. By clicking onto a gallery and then subsequently onto an art work, an interested purchaser is then able to send an email direct to the gallery to obtain additional information in the form of price or availability. Additionally, visitors to *The Armory* area of *Artsy.net* can read a series of articles such as, '*Highlights of the fair*', '*Must-see Museum Exhibitions During Armory Arts Week 2015*' and guides to sections of the curated elements of the fair such as, '*Modernists to Mavericks: Your Guide to the Middle Eastern Artists Showing at FOCUS MENAM*'. Other examples of such platforms include *Paddle8.com*. Previously providing a similar function for earlier editions of *The Armory Show* and for art fairs such as *NADA*, *Paddle8.com* has since refocused its business to being an online auction house.

²²¹

Winkleman, E as quoted in Kinsella, E (2012), *Artnet News*, *Art Fairs Join Forces with Virtual World*, *Art net News* [Online] <http://www.artnews.com/2012/03/06/art-fairs-join-forces-with-virtual-world/>

Just as we are seeing a growing tendency for larger non-curated art fairs to move into closer orbit to their smaller satellite art fair counterparts, here too we see art fairs embracing and incorporating the online function of what could equally be perceived as competitors to their territory. So while we are yet to see another attempt of the focused online art fair that *VIP* represented, we are witnessing a proliferation of the use of online functions as an extension of, rather than as a replacement for, the physical art fair.

By extending the potential sales impacts for galleries, these virtual platforms increase the value for money correlation that a gallery will consider when deciding which art fair to spend their money on, thus once again providing an example of how the market place for art fair participants could be read as becoming more competitive.

4.v Decline in the gallery as sales model

If the increasingly competitive market place, brought about by the multi-layered expansion of non-curated art fairs can be seen as one of the potential factors impacting on the continuation of curated art fairs; the increasing importance of art fairs as a site for sales is now also being registered.

In her book, *Seven Days in the Art World*, Sarah Thornton relates how the Lisson Gallery, London, takes part in on average seven art fairs a year and that the 'footfall at the combined fairs is such that 50 percent of the gallery's turnover is done through these events.²²² It is a situation that is increasingly being reported, with gallerists such as Dominique Lévy, co-director of L&M gallery being quoted in *The Art Newspaper* as

²²² Thornton, S,(2009), *Seven Days in the Art World*, London, Granta Publications p.90

saying, 'We do much more business at the fairs than at the gallery—no question'²²³ and Kate McGarry recorded in a an art-market discussion called, 'Market Matters' remembering when collectors would come to her gallery to buy first rather than waiting until art fairs to purchase.²²⁴ Increasingly therefore, the art fair is being reported as having become the main sales generator for certain galleries replacing those sales made through their home premises. It is a tendency further reported in the annual TEFAF report which in early 2015 announced a series of headline figures confirming the increasing importance of the art fair, as well as the internet, as sites for sales, with art fairs accounting for 40 percent of all dealer sales in 2014.²²⁵

For those galleries that can afford the high price of art fair participation this is welcome news able as they are to meet the staff and financial resource implications of taking part. However, for what is described as the mid-scale gallery or small-scale gallery, the negative impact of this evolution of the art fair as main sales platform is being communicated. Articles in the *Financial Times* and *The Economist* both highlight the number of recent gallery closures as symptomatic of what Stefano Baia Curioni has called the 'strengthening of the strong', i.e. the bolstering of a number of top galleries and top art fairs selling to a select number of top collectors.²²⁶

²²³ Burns, C. (2011), *The Art Newspaper, Gallery system is structurally weak*, The Art News Paper [Online] <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Gallery-system-is-structurally-weak/24188> and http://www.ifae.com/emails/2011/ifae_sales/ArtNewspaper072811.pdf

²²⁴ DACS (2012), *Debate:Market Matters (Part 3/5)* Kate MacGarry, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WEDZShLKu3A>

²²⁵ Daniel, D (2015), artnet news, 40 Percent of World Gallery Art Sales Made at Fairs and Other Key Findings in the TEFAF Art Market Report 2015, [Online] <https://news.artnet.com/market/5-key-findings-from-tefaf-report-2015-276301>

²²⁶ Curioni, S.B (2011), *Art Basel, Art Basel Salon Talk, The Artistic Meaning of Art Market Value* [Online] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwO0XkGefCo>

In her article, *Small galleries adjust as screw tightens*, Rachel Spence points to the growth of top level galleries such as Zwirner, Gagosian, White Cube, Pace and Hauser & Wirth, who have begun to cover some of the ground previously occupied by emerging and mid-scale galleries.²²⁷ Opening additional galleries in cities around the world (Gagosian for example has 17 outlets in 7 countries) these galleries are expanding geographically adding to the existing market infrastructure in the cities they expand to. In addition, these top level galleries are now also offering opportunities for entry level collecting of established artists as well as emerging artists, the latter of which has historically been the domain of emerging and mid-level galleries. While Rachel Spence's article cites a number of small to mid-scale London based galleries that have closed over the last five years such as Hotel, Dicksmith, Bischoff & Weiss, through my own research I can add Doggerfisher, Ceri Hand, Poppy Sebire to this list, with Sebire citing the lack of home grown sales as part of the issue saying, 'Galleries this small and this young are threatened by the market'.²²⁸ It is perhaps most strongly articulated by Franz Schultheis who in his contribution to the publication, *Fairland* cites a dealer who conveyed the message that, 'Art fairs are destroying galleries'.²²⁹

²²⁷ Spence, R (2014), Ft.com, *Small galleries adjust as screw tightens*, Financial Times [Online] <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/821a07be-cc8c-11e3-ab99-00144feabdc0.html>

²²⁸ Clark T (2012), a-n.co.uk, *London's Poppy Sebire gallery*, a-n, [Online] <https://www.a-n.co.uk/news/tough-climate-forces-poppy-sebire-gallery-to-close>

²²⁹ Schultheis F. (2014) *A Globalizing Art World*, Garutti F (ed.) *Fairland, Explorations, Insights and Outlooks on the Future of Art Fairs*. London, Koenig Books, pp57-76 p.64

As the article *Fairly Popular* in The Economist, in January 2014 stated,

London's new rich buy art differently. They often spend little time in the capital and do not know it well. Traipsing around individual galleries is inconvenient, particularly as galleries have moved out of central London. The mall-like set up of a fair is much more suitable.²³⁰

Published in May and January 2014 respectively this latter article clearly articulates one of the key reasons perceived to be behind the continuing growth and importance of the contemporary art fair. Described as asset rich yet time poor, the 'one-stop' shop of the large scale art fair provides multiple opportunities around the world for collectors to access the same galleries and the same artists. The convenience of this approach is therefore one factor.

Smaller and emerging galleries present the target market for curated art fairs. If these galleries are witnessing difficulties with the sustainability of their business model then the costs of art fair participation will become prohibitive and their investment in art fair participation will become much more strategic. If larger non-curated art fairs are increasingly making space for emerging galleries in their model, increasing their sales potential offers to participants in the form of parallel virtual platforms and increasing their curatorial gravitas through an expanded curatorial engagement, then non-curated art fairs and their new initiatives could be read as a safer investment in which to participate.

²³⁰ The Economist, (2014), *Fairly Popular*, The rapid growth of art fairs is changing the way galleries operate, The Economist [Online] www.economist.com/news/britain/21594262-rapid-growth-art-fairs-changing-way-galleries-operate-fairly

4.vi Non -curated art fairs refocus

Other recent activity by non-curated art fairs could also be seen as part of the further enhancing of their competitive edge in the market place. In what could be perceived as creating barriers to the growth of the public interest in their fairs, both *Art Basel* and *Frieze* in recent editions implemented new developments which were reported on in the press. While *Art Basel* in 2014 for example reduced its public access days in favour of an extra VIP day, *Frieze* (London) in 2014 made of one of the previously public days into a ‘professional day’ and additionally decided not to open on Sunday, traditionally a day with a high audience of general public.

Frieze London has axed its Sunday opening—due, apparently, to complaints from disgruntled exhibitors that the day brought seething hordes of students and families, but few sales²³¹

For those galleries inside the fair providing them with more days tailored to ‘professionals’ i.e. those people who have a job to do in advancing a gallery’s critical as well as commercial agenda and in enhancing the symbolic value of the art on display, these initiatives once again offer a better value for money cost ratio for their with regard to participation. Also by decreasing the number of days that the galleries need to be on site also reduces their additional costs such as hotel, travel and subsistence.

In another move which looks at the redrawing of the audience space of the art fair, this time within the curated art fair model, *Independent*, launched *Independent Projects* in New York in November 2014. Coinciding with New York’s annual

²³¹ The Art Newspaper (2014), *Tell me why you don’t like Sundays*, The Art Newspaper Frieze Dailies p.22 [Online] <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/fairs/Frieze/2014/2.pdf>

contemporary art auction week, *Independent Projects* has gone one step further with regard to establishing the boundaries between the business and leisure function of the art fair. As their website explains,

Independent Projects will split its delivery into two phases – an art fair and an exhibition phase. Projects will be of an unexpected duration, transforming after the initial weekend from an art fair format with exhibitors onsite, to an exhibition where the visitor can walk through at his or her ease through a series of successive shows resembling a group exhibition.²³²

This distinction between the functions provides a clear signal to potential audience groups as to how they might engaged with the event at a level appropriate to their intended interaction. For those interested in the purchase of contemporary art attendance at the first phase with those without this commercial agenda, the latter. However, rather than reducing the opportunities for the general public to access and engage with the fair in the models provided by *Frieze* and *Art Basel*, a section of the fair is in effect being tailor made for them. As Alanna Martinez states of the 2014 inaugural edition of *Independent Projects*,

Overall, the fair was more than pleasant to walk through. The art work had breathing room, dealers weren't pushy—far from it, we almost had a hard time spotting them—and while it may have been hard to keep track of where one

²³² *Independent*, (2014), *Independentnewyork.com About Projects* [Online] [Accessed 9th October 2014] <http://independentnewyork.com/projects2014/>

show ended and another began, that was probably the best part. Getting lost in the mini shows.²³³

This suggestion that art fairs are reducing and redrawing the opportunities for engagement by the general non-buying public, suggests perhaps a refocusing on the business rather than their cultural / leisure function of the art fair as a model. For participating galleries therefore, this could be read again as a more attractive proposition with regard to a cost v potential sales impact ratio.

With only a couple of examples occurring to date however, it is too early yet to suggest if what we are seeing is the beginnings of the retraction rather than the expansion of the art fair as cultural platform.

4.vii Disintermediation and New Values of Exchange – Future Markets

In the above examples we have seen how some of the existing curated art fairs have created new frameworks through which the general public can engage with them and some non-curated art fairs have reduced points of access for a general public audience. Elsewhere however, we are witnessing both the success of existing and the emergence of new developments which are focused on breaking down barriers to engagement for the general public.

The *Affordable Art Fair*, was established in 1999 as a continuation of Will's Art Warehouse in London. Set up by Will Ramsay, Will's Art Warehouse sought to make available for sale work by unknown artists who by not 'carrying a premium for

²³³ Martinez, A (2014) Observer.com, *The Chillest Art Fair Out There: Independent Projects Sets a Laid-Back Pace*, Observer [Online] <http://observer.com/2014/11/the-chillest-art-fair-out-there-independent-projects-takes-the-pressure-off-dealers/#ixzz3T9k3G8cs>

reputation' had work available between £50-£2500. *The Affordable Art Fair* followed suit and built its fair on the premise of 'ease of buying, breadth of choice, affordable prices, and user-friendly approach'.²³⁴ After launching its initial fair in Battersea Park with 10,000 visitors, *The Affordable Art Fair* has expanded to additional locations in London and elsewhere in UK as well as to 6 other countries with a total reported audience of over 1.6 million.

The Other Art Fair began life in London in 2008 as the project of former Business and Law graduate Ryan Stanier. Now in its 7th year, it too is announcing increased numbers of both participants and audience as demonstrated in its post 2014 London fair press release.²³⁵ As a fair it too is also expanding geographically with a regional edition in Bristol and an international edition due to take place in Sydney in September 2015. What we see with the both the *Affordable Art Fair* and *The Other Art Fair* is the promotion of a process for buying and selling art which is described as obvious, accessible, inclusive and easy.

Unlike the other art fairs mentioned to date however, *The Other Art Fair* is an artists' self-representing art fair. Here it is the artists themselves that present their work and are present at the event selling directly to the audience that attends. Similarly, a new *Studio* section was added to the 2015 edition of *Buy Art Fair* which, once again enabled artists to sell directly to the public. In these models the traditional role of the gallery representative as intermediary is removed from the equation. By

²³⁴ *The Affordable Art Fair* (no date), *Our Story: from Battersea and beyond*, [Online] [Accessed 14th August 2015] <http://affordableartfair.com/battersea/about/>

²³⁵ *The Other Art Fair* (2014) *Record Numbers at the Other Art Fair*, Email 29th October 2014

doing so, these art fairs, or new sections within art fairs, challenge the ‘subscription process’ as traditionally understood and described in Chapter One. These new developments provide evidence therefore of what Olav Velthuis sees as one of the defining aspects of the art market of the future. Velthuis perceives that ‘a disintermediation’ of markets is occurring with new trends appearing that are seeking to democratise the processes of buying and selling.²³⁶ The removal of the role of the ‘intermediary’ as exemplified by *The Other Art Fair* and *Buy Art Fair*’s Studio section, could be seen to as allowing for ‘new patterns of taste formation’ to occur.²³⁷ In these new models, the status of the gallery / dealer as traditional taste maker or art authority within the purchase process is being eroded.

While we are witnessing the growth and expansion of those art fair models that seek to create easy access to the purchase of art at art fairs, new models are also emerging which are seeing to create new methods of valuing and exchanging art works.

Poppositions’ agenda of creating a dialogue around new methods of valuing exchange described earlier, can be considered as part of this evolution as can *Sluice*’s 2014 project *Exchange Rate: The Bushwick Expo*. Described as ‘An international exposition of artworks and art galleries in and around Bushwick, Brooklyn’, *Exchange Rate: The Bushwick Expo*, was a collaboration between *Sluice*, Theodore Art and Centotto and took place for 4 days from 23rd – 26th October 2014.²³⁸ Once again, the

²³⁶ Velthuis, O, (2012) *The contemporary art market between stasis and flux*, Lind, M, Velthuis, O (eds.) *Contemporary Art and its commercial markets a report on current conditions and future scenarios*, Berlin, Sternberg Press, pp 17-50

²³⁷ Ibid

²³⁸ *Sluice* (2014) *Exchange Rates* [Online] [Date Accessed 20th October 2014] <http://sluice.info/bushwick>

publicity produced for the project highlighted that the event was not to be read as an art fair, 'It is an exposition, to wit. Not a fair.'²³⁹ Once again however, by calling into use the terminology of fair, and by calling the event 'Exchange Rates' there is a suggestion to the reader, that the project is examining notions of the financial values accrued in the exchange of the creative object and the creative act. Similarly the use of the descriptive term 'exposition' as opposed to exhibition, brings with it a duality due to the fact that as a term it is used to describe both commercial /trade focused displays of manufactured goods as well as and non-commercial displays of art and culture. Once again, as with *Sluice* (London) the selling of contemporary art becomes part of the project's theoretical framework.

Bringing evidence of this newly emerging current right up to date, *the-art.market* and the newly publicised *We Are Fair* art fair could be perhaps noted as further examples of what might be a new art market trend. *the-art.market* which is planned to take place in October 2015 at Salford's Islington Mill, is described as a project,

that seeks to re-define the relationship between art, artists, and audience. It

endeavours to create a space that sees the value of art based on social

exchange and genuine need over the abstract perceptions of economic value.²⁴⁰

Taking the form of a one day event artists are invited to showcase their work to an audience of 'artists, curators, and interested parties from the art world in Manchester

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ the-art.market (2015), What is the-art.market ? [Online][Accessed 29th September 2015] <http://www.the-art.market/>

and beyond.²⁴¹ In an email received about *the-art.market* it is described as a 'cashless event, which will be mediated by the-art.market, creating an alternative way to do business',²⁴² with the aim of the day being for artists to receive offers of 'real value' for example,

...by offering to hold an exhibition of an artist's work, hosting a residency at a local gallery, exchanging for another work of art, or by simply giving a contact of use to the artist.²⁴³

We Are Fair will launch in Madrid in February 2016. Announcing itself via a press release, *We Are Fair* describes itself as

We want everybody to come to WE ARE FAIR ! that's why we have prepared four kinds of exhibitors, Galleries, Cultural Institutions, Spaces / Artists, Creative Collectives / Art for Children / Self-edition, Object-Books, Fanzines²⁴⁴

Little additional information exists at this stage about *We Are Fair* apart from a short description on their website which announces that it will be 'an *ad hoc* curatorial feat'.²⁴⁵

As with Islington Mill's '*the art market*', '*We Are Fair*' is operating from a position of inclusivity suggesting an opening up of the processes of buying and selling to wider constituency. Again these examples could be seen as further evidence not just

²⁴¹ Ibid

²⁴² the-art.market (2015), Open call opportunity: the-art.market Email received September 2015.

²⁴³ Ibid

²⁴⁴ *We Are Fair* (2015), Press release sent by email 14th September 2015

²⁴⁵ *We Are Fair*, (2015), *Exhibitors* [Online] [Accessed 15th September 2015] <http://www.wearefair.es/exhibitors.html>

of the disintermediation of markets that Velthuis predicts, but also of new patterns of exchange.

In his recent article, *ArtRank and The Flippers: Apocalypse Now?* Olav Velthuis describes how some of criticism levelled at the recently launched art investment website ArtRank is precisely due to its undermining of the '...dominant cultural categorization [that] has long provided gallerists with power.'²⁴⁶ *ArtRank* is the newest in a series of online services that present art world success rankings for artists. In addition to other similar services described in Chapter One that use information such as visibility within exhibitions and presence within institution collections, *Art Rank* also takes into consideration an artist's / art works social media popularity on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. In recognising this as an example of the shift in the validation process of artists, Velthuis also recognises a shift in the purchasing behaviour of collectors who,

do not form their taste in art by visiting exhibitions, reading magazines, talking to gallerists, or hanging out with artists, but by surfing Instagram and leaving likes on Facebook.... In short, they see the Internet as a democratic, liberating force that can potentially erode the gallerist's symbolic stronghold.²⁴⁷

As I conclude this thesis in October 2015, what we are beginning to see therefore, is the emergence of new physical and virtual art fair / art sales models that are seeking to dissolve and democratise the process of value formation. Once again,

²⁴⁶ Velthuis, O (2014), *Texte Zur Kunst, ArtRank and the Flippers: Apocalypse Now?* [Online] [Accessed 19th September 2015] <https://www.textezurkunst.de/96/olav-velthuis-artrank-und-die-flipper/>

²⁴⁷ Ibid

with only these few examples recognised by me to date, it is too early yet to judge whether or not these new modes of validation will impact on the traditionally held view of the process of 'subscription' and too early yet to tell whether these developments suggest a new art fair typology in the making. However, as my interest and involvement in contemporary art fair's continues to the present day, I will be keenly watching this space.

5. Conclusion

As the title of this thesis describes, a consideration of the art fair as curatorial platform has been at the core of my study. This research has taken the form of an historical survey from 1967 to the present day recording the gradual introduction and proliferation of the contemporary art fair. Key to this survey has been identifying on a case by case basis how the role of the curator has been employed, as well as offering an analysis of the impacts on the art fair model and the wider art world infrastructure that this introduction of the curatorial role, and the proliferation of the art fair has had.

As evidence in Chapter Two and Three has shown, over the last 49 years art fairs have proliferated in their numbers from two in the late 1960's and early 1970's in form of *Kunstmarkt Köln* and *Art Basel* to over 200 in the 2000's. What this study has also shown is that in addition to their increase in numbers through their introduction of the curatorial role, art fairs have also expanded in terms of the scope of the activity that they present. Considered as having multiple motivators, the introduction of the curatorial role has been led by the desire to represent more fully the breadth of contemporary art being made today, provide opportunities for the discussion and debate of art, as well as by the desire to provide more points of access to more art for more people. As this thesis has also shown the introduction and expansion of curatorial activity is also seen to be part of the marketing, positioning, income generation, city branding and supply chain strategies of an art fair. As the time-line of their emergence shows the art fair as an expanded commercial and cultural platform is now seen as the default.

In this model described above the curatorial role has traditionally been employed as content producer for programmes of activity that run in parallel to the sales function sections of the art fairs. However, as Chapter Three has shown over the last ten years we have witnessed a different application of the curatorial role into art fairs. With the emergence of fairs such as *VOLTA*, *Sunday*, *Independent* and *Sluice*, we have seen a shift in the positioning of the curatorial role. In curated art fairs I have shown how the role of the curator and the conditions of curating are intrinsic to the conception of the entire art fair from the outset. Here the curatorial role and the conventions of exhibition-making not only act upon who is selected to participate but also on the art fairs design and delivery. Classified in this thesis as curated art fairs, here the re-evaluation of the art fair format is a key consideration. Rather than being part of the expanding of the art fair's offer as in non-curated art fairs, the curatorial role can be seen to be part of the redefining and streamlining of the art fair's function and format. By removing the standard art fair booth structure curated art fairs create site-sensitive rather than generic display formats. In requiring solo, duo or curated booth presentations art works in curated art fairs are contextualised within an artists' broader practice, or are drawn together around a shared curatorial premise. The supporting information provided online and onsite by the fair and by the exhibitors themselves emphasise the artistic rather than the financial value of the artworks on display. All of these factors create the conditions where the viewing of art in the curated art fair can be likened more to the experience of viewing art in an exhibition context than in an art fair sales context.

As a result of these curatorial decisions made I have argued that distance is created between the artwork and its status as an object for sale and distance between

the event and its status as an art fair. In doing so, I believe that curated art fairs 'deal properly' with the relationship between money and art and challenge the criticisms often levelled at art fairs as a place to view and engage with art.

Common to both non-curated and curated art fairs has been my reading that the introduction of the role of the curator has also seen the art fair gain importance as part of the mechanism through which the critical value of an artist and their art works is ascribed.

The increase in the appeal of the art fair to broader audiences, the art fairs diversifying of the points of engagement to more art by more audiences, the better art viewing opportunities that these fairs afford and the art fair's growing significance in sanctioning of artists and art works, can all be seen as positive impacts of the proliferation and expansion of curatorial role in art fairs. However, as Chapter Four has shown, negative impacts of these effects have also been registered with the decline in the gallery as sales model, the decline in the gallery as taste-maker and a slowdown in the appearance of new models to challenge this ascension of the non-curated art fair, all determined as some of the wider impacts of the ongoing expansion of art fairs.

While the emergence of new examples of curated art fairs may have slowed what Chapter Four has also provided is evidence of new models appearing that are seeking to break down the traditional boundaries between artist, seller and purchaser. Here the perceived importance of the role of the curator as art authority and conferrer of value is reduced, along with the perceived importance of gallery as intermediary and tastemaker. Here new methods of valorisation are being sought and new systems of exchange are proposed, some of which aim to bypass money altogether. With only a

few examples of this surfacing to date it is too early yet to determine whether we are at the beginnings of a new typology of art fair as in the case of the curated art fair before them. However, what these new developments do illustrate is that the art fair continues to be a dynamic and responsive model that has been shown to react not only to immediate peer-group market-place conditions, but also to the wider theoretical and economic context in which they sit.

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure number 1 : Brien, P (2016), Typology of Art Fairs

Figure number 2: Brien, P (2014), VOLTA Art Fair, Basel, Switzerland [Photograph] In possession of The Author, Salford, UK

Figure number 3: Brien, P (2014), London Art Fair, London, UK [Photograph] In possession of The Author, Salford, UK

Figure number 4: Brien, P (2015), Sunday, London, UK [Photograph] In possession of The Author, Salford,UK

Figure number 5 : Brien, P (2010), Sunday, London, UK [Photograph] In possession of The Author, Salford, UK

Figure number 6 : Brien, P (2015), Sunday, London, UK [Photograph] In possession of The Author, UK

Figure number 7: Brien, P (2015), Sunday, London, UK [Photograph] In possession of The Author, Salford, UK

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Figure number 10 : Brien, P (2012), CAVE, Liverpool, UK [Photograph] In possession

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APPENDIX 4.i: CASE STUDY INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewee: Amanda Coulson, Director VOLTA art fairs
Interview Method: In person interview conducted on 21st June 2014 at VOLTA (Basel) Markthalle, Basel. Transcribed from audio recording.

PB The research is focusing on the evolution of the art fair model and picking up specifically on the engagement of the curator in the art-fair model, how it manifests itself, what impact it has in terms of spatial design, overarching concerns around who is positioned next to who perhaps, or whether or not there is a larger narrative for the fair, some speculation as to why that may be happening and then a glimpse into the future as to how the art-fair model may evolve over time. I wanted to talk to you obviously because what has happened is that within the research you have come up quite frequently, particularly within Paco Barragán's book, that was a really good starting point for me, as I was already thinking about some of these things and then there was a book and it really clarified some of the thinking processes I was having and you mentioned in there as VOLTA being one of the first fairs to engage curators in the decision making processes. So

PB Could you elaborate a little bit as to how curators became involved and what the curatorial role in those early days was, how it manifested itself?

AC Well, when we had our first successful year basically, the first year, we realised, then, because originally we thought it would be invitational, we thought we would just invite our 20 friends, which is how it started but then there was such a high demand, you realised that you have to open it somehow because you can't assume you are omniscient and you know every good gallery so, we were like o.k. let's open it up, let's have a process, and then we started thinking about who we wanted to overlook that process and since the fair was founded by galleries, we all always found it problematic that galleries, I think there is a slight difference between galleries inviting their friends and galleries judging other galleries, do you see what I am saying ? So then I think that when it started, it was organic because it was like, then we sort of tried to do that this year, 'Spencer why don't you come and tell us who are two galleries you'd like to', because you rely on that professional expertise, but when it starts to get very high stakes, of course, and I have been on committees, it gets very political of course, because the gallery has an agenda, they don't want some particular galleries around them, because maybe they share an artist, maybe whatever it might be, they had some story and the ones that they will work with, the younger ones is normally, there is sort of an agenda there and it struck us that was a bit like telling Porsche they could decide who would get into the into the car show, right, to a certain degree and that you have to kind of, so we thought why don't we actually involve people that look at a lot of art but maybe come at it from a different way and so we wanted, and the other thing, was that galleries are very of course very very concerned with the market, so we thought it might be interesting, to invite a group of people that were looking at work with other concepts in mind, so that was really the idea, let's invite some people who are maybe

looking at work in a different way, and so that's how it started, and then you know really it started just come and pick out of the people that have applied and let's just sit down at a table and pick them together and we then also realised that the curators could also, since then you have like agents out in the world, we tried to like we had one curator from Japan and we had one Los Angeles and you know they would then also advise us because of course sitting there waiting for applications to come in again you know maybe there is a great gallery in LA, just never heard of VOLTA, we sort of used them as also recommenders and they were allowed one carte blanche which meant they could invite a gallery, they wouldn't have to go through the process of whether the other curators liked them, and then we did also have discussions on, as the fair grew, because in the first location there really just one room, like you said about the architecture, how when you create a show you want to create these moments and there is a parcours to a certain extent and also then the catalogue, and the catalogue was born out of a lot of intense discussion, and because I actually was thinking of getting rid of the catalogue but a lot of the curators were like, no catalogues are really important and actually what is missing is there is not enough text and so that is how we came up with page format and that was really something very much part of the curatorial process as well.

PB so in addition to the selecting of the galleries there was also an engagement in terms of the contextual information.

AC Exactly because that is always a problem at a fair isn't it?, how do you contextualise all of this stuff and so I think that is where curators help as we were always thinking about how we could make sense of it because that is really what curating is, telling a story and then in the beginning, a lot of it happened as the fair grew, when it was just 23 galleries and the next year it was 45 it wasn't so imperative, but then we got to a certain point maybe in the fourth year, where we were growing and we were up to like 60 that's when we made a conscious decision and actually after we opened New York and we saw the success of that and we made a conscious decision to ask for, we really prefer galleries to bring 2 to 3 artists and there are some that have done 6, but, like in the case of Charlie Smith, he has done a great job it's a show,

PB and what he has done is contextualised it within a curatorial framework,

AC Exactly, and that is what I have always tried to talk to galleries about because I have always said what I find boring about fairs if you go to the main fair, it's like the kind of the greatest hits list on the wall, and very often they are nothing to do with one another or, I always said to the gallery, you know especially at our level, you are going to be meeting a lot of people who don't know who you are, might never come to where you are and this is your opportunity to show them what you do in the gallery and what you do in the gallery is so much more than just throwing some stuff up on the wall that you give prices for.

PB So that is something that you would look for in a galleries proposal, which presents them as they are?

AC Exactly and there is a couple here that have sent proposals in and they haven't done that and I have gone and had words with them too because people are like well I thought that this was supposed to be curated, well I thought so too. So you take that into consideration - we go and look at what people applied with and what they brought.

PB One of the other things I remembered was one of the NY fairs, the one we were in actually had a theme, had a title,

AC We did, we tried in NY and I have to say, I don't mean this in a bad way, but the biggest obstacle to curating a fair are the dealers, and that's because -did you see the guy who was walking around who was also doing his masters who was asking lots of questions ?- well he said that some of the galleries thought that it was much better when you [Amanda] were involved in each gallery, but sometime you get backlash from that and with the first couple of fairs in NY we had a theme and we tried to invite the artists more than the gallery really, obviously we were inviting the gallery too, but still in NY the artist name is bigger than the gallery name and we really tried to kind of give it a context and we thought with solo shows that would be possible because, again it was only 50 galleries , so 50 artists yes that's a show, and so we tried to find things that we were looking at for the first two years and so in the first year it was called in the 'Eye of the Beholder', it was all about ugly sculpture basically, we were noticing a lot of rough ceramics, we thought that was really interesting and noticing a lot of this - but the backlash we had was 'well I could have told you I wouldn't have sold this here, this isn't the market for it, we know what shows our artist have upcoming, and it makes sense to be in the city at that time, we know the collectors' and so we won't then invite artists we will invite the galleries and we will have them give us proposals so they can now propose 2 or 3 artists and first we thought we would then try to make some sense out of the proposals, but then it becomes very difficult so now, New York doesn't have an overarching theme, which I think is kind of a shame but again, ultimately, dealers are there to sell and again if they have an artist on a residency in New York and they don't have to ship the work , fine economics as you know are an issue, and so it is a bit, arrogant not arrogant but you know, for a fair director to be well I don't care I just want that artist from your programme and it just doesn't work and so we try to find a happy medium, now we take the proposals and we take what is good and then within the fair it is much easier in New York within the fair I really sit and look at each proposal .

PB so that is the next question really, how you make decisions about what sits next to what and if that is part of the curatorial planning,

AC Definitely but in New York it is much easier, but like here for example, the guy he has been here for 10 years, every single year and so he needed to have front row kind of booth and so it becomes harder, in NY there were two floors, they were fairly egalitarian, some people liked the ground floor because that is where people came in first some people liked the second floor because it had better light, so it wasn't really like one floor had precedence over the other floor, but you know quite often at fairs, certain galleries are like well I have been with you so long I have to be at the front, I

don't actually believe that the front is the best place to be necessarily sometimes it is, sometimes it isn't I really depends on the building

PB and also depends on the person doesn't it whether they can attune themselves straight away?

AC exactly it depends on the person coming in, some people want to go straight in, some people want to go in and work their way back, some people want to go to the bar first and look at the plan some people want to start at the front and go through A1 to Z26, but I don't really believe in the good booth placement particularly, I really don't, because also I have seen it again and again year after year, there are some tiny guys in the corner in the smallest booth in the back and he does really well and there is someone else, there are so many factors and so in NY I definitely do that and here I do that a little bit, I try when I am looking at the plan, but also there are different sized booths, here I only have that many booths that size and if that person wants that sized booth and I would like him to be next to this person but this person wanted a small booth, so it gets quite complicated, but I do try to at least put people you know who I think are going to have some sort of understanding whether it is personal or artistic but that also matters, curating like the people, sometime you look at the map and you think no, I really can't have him next to him because you know whatever reason so, you curate it on a lot of levels, and you don't want to get little groupings of like too many Italians for example, because then they are all going to stand around talking Italian, you need to kind of spread people around a little bit.

PB I have been looking at this open space model, this emergence of the idea of questioning the booth structure and taking down walls and looking at ways in which fairs can in some way start to replicate the conditions of viewing in a gallery.

AC Well, once again, it is going to sound like I hate dealers, I don't hate dealers I am married to a dealer, but once again dealers are not visionary that way, because I have tried that too. In fact the first NY had very few walls, and it was mostly open space and even here like I hate the booths on the corner that have the wall, I think it is so much better to have a two-walled corner booth, and leave it open than to have the wall because what happens is you end up with a corridor whereas if you take those walls away you end up with a big piazza and the amount of time I spend trying to convince people sometimes they go for it and it always works, but even this year there is someone and she isn't having a good fair and I kept telling her if you had let us leave that wall off I guarantee you, but I am paying for the metres of wall and I am like I understand that but you know I think probably you would have sold more if you had left it off, and so the problem is that quite often dealers are like I have to have as much as I can on the walls because you know if I get enough up then something is going to hit and I think that's not actually the case, so I do try to curate the booths like that too and I really call up the dealer and say quite often we send the plan without the wall and then if they say, don't I get the third wall and then I get on the phone and say, listen I really think you will be better off but it is hard and I understand the other side, the anxiety, and the money I understand all of that I have been married to a dealer for 20 years so I know exactly – if I just take that other painting or if I make a closet then I

can have extra, but I do think a corner booth definitely so I really try to do that and try to then create, especially in that scenario, you definitely want to have two booths together that make sense because if it is all open and they are staring at each other and you are standing the middle and you have it all around you, so you know I definitely try to curate those moments, for sure.

PB So that's also about the visitor experience, as well as much as the dealer experience?

AC Absolutely because that's the problem, the dealer is always looking at it from their three wall experience and I am always looking at it from a global experience. And I think as a visitor if you come in and you don't feel overwhelmed and you don't feel hemmed in you will spend longer there you won't want to get out quickly, and you will probably buy more and I can't prove it but I have the feeling because I have seen it when booths do it, that actually works and the nicer the experience is for the user who is the visitor, of course the longer they are going to stay and they are going to come back, people have now come back this year two or three times, to this fair because it is actually a pleasant experience.

PB Yes, a lot of people have been saying that as they have been going round it, it feels airy, feels very fresh all of those kind of comments

AC Exactly and so that is somewhere where you want to have lunch or hangout or go and meet a friend or whatever - it is because we also have to bear in mind that all of these people as much as they are here to look at and buy art are also here to meet friends, have engagements with people.

PB So you think that there is some benefit to breaking down the booth structure?

AC I definitely think there is benefit to that but it would be hard to do it because first of all of the artwork, so if you are really having no walls then it's got to be sculpture right, so that's difficult, so I think less walls would be nice, very nice, I think you get less of that rabbit warren feeling less of that you know Marrakesh kind of feeling, there are a few booths here that are overhung, but generally they are not and I think it really makes a difference, and I really have to convince people every year not to overhang because it gives you room to breathe.

PB because one of the things I have been writing about is that idea of making, in theory, trying to replicate the gallery, you can't entirely replicate the conditions of the gallery because it isn't but in some sense it is about creating the space for the viewer not to kind of forget that they are at an art fair but...

AC But again if you walk into your booth that looks like a gallery show,

PB Well we try very hard to do that because you know, for us that's the only way we can think about it you, you know because that's the experience we are trying to create

AC and there are a couple of booths here that aren't doing well it's also a very difficult conversation, one I am thinking of in particular and they literally just threw up a few paintings and there is just no, at least then have something on the wall, like a text about it, it's just looks like nothing. I came with four paintings in my suitcase and I just hung them on a nail and that's why they are having a bad fair and it's not because necessarily the work is bad either, but also it's because again, people have a lot to look at and if they walk past something that doesn't look like it is going to be a teachable moment I think they are like o.k I will walk past.

PB One of these rationales I have been thinking about is whether that move towards an open space model that looking at ways to replicate the conditions of the museum is in some ways trying to pretend /forget that it isn't an art fair

AC Definitely I think there is part of that , I don't necessarily subscribe to that because I have always been a big defender of the market and of fairs and everyone wants to demonise money and demonise the market and demonise dealers, and you are all in it for the money, well I know again, having been married to one if you are in it for the money then you should just give up right now and do something else and it is about passion a lot of the time and so I think that is also why I do think about what helps the dealers in terms of and that's going back to the catalogue, I always found the traditional fair catalogue not useful to the dealer you know if you have a fair catalogue that fat and you have one page with one colour picture and a list of artists what does that do for you. You can't use that as a selling tool, you know the leaflet they are a selling tool for you and it costs the same to print a 1000 of them as it does one full colour catalogue so you know I think you have to think about that the dealer is there to sell, you have to and what are the conditions of selling? Part of those conditions is privacy, privacy is one reason why walls won't break down completely because I think it is very difficult to have a negotiation with a client if everyone can hear you. Someone is like standing there waiting for that client they know to walk over to them , so privacy, that's something and you know being kind of able to keep the collector focused could be hard in a completely open plan one, so I think that is another challenge in getting rid of the booth structure, but I think less walls definitely would be nice of course - that then comes to economics also for the fair organiser, because I would love to have even less booths but of course you need to maximise the square footage. If the building costs x amount to rent, you know the harsh realities of bringing a flat-bed truck with enough walls for 20 booths or for 80 booths is the same costs, so if you only bring enough for 20 booths you are not amortising the costs of the flat-bed truck so you know, getting the electricians in for a day they wire so many booths in a day so again of course amortisation always comes into it and you need to find that balance between doing enough that it makes sense to do it and not doing so many that it ruins the sense. So there is the economics of the dealer you got to think of the economics of the fair as well.

PB VOLTA is described partly as an invitational fair how does that work?

AC It really is only New York, so we always call NY invitational, basically we just invited the galleries - there still isn't an open process for New York in the same way that there is for Basel, for Basel anyone can go online anyone can apply and because that's how it started it started invitationally we called up 20 friends - you want to do a fair Basel ?, but then suddenly everyone was like we want to do the fair so we have to start the process and once the process was then open we didn't want to go back to it to say o.k. now we aren't going to have you, so the open process in Basel has been open since the 2nd year, but when we started New York because it was started with the artist idea we thought let's just invite galleries and now pretty much I send out mail to the galleries I'd like to do the fair and then some galleries will call and say can I just send in a proposal and normally what I do is say well you can, it's going to be at the bottom of the pile because I'm doing my invitations first. But if it turns out that it's a good proposal, or I have the space then I will consider it. There still really isn't an open process, we don't get 300 / 400 applications, last year we had 90 spaces and I maybe had a 100 submissions and 80 of those from people I had called to say I want you to be in the fair or I sent an email like I do to you and then they get back to you. We still try to keep it smaller because again it's easier to control it's much easier to control and then there is less disappointment as well because the awful part of the process is the worst time of year.

PB I don't envy you that at all

AC It is awful to send those emails out because I feel, again, I know that every dealer is passionate about what they do and you feel like an absolute heel you really do and I actually take the time but I don't know how other fair directors manage it, but if people write to me and say can you explain why this has happened I will actually write back to them, I will write them a letter and I will say number 1 was...

PB I think that's very valuable

AC I think that it is and that is something that we always try to do here because I always saw Uli open the letter the two line letter thank you for applying, you didn't make it this year, it is so in your face, and so our rejection letters, which you have never received, are very well crafted, the rejection letter is like - this year we went from 70 to 60 so we had to lose 10 spaces, and then on top of that we have to have a few new people you know whatever and we really try to explain the dynamics of what's happening because already that helps.

PB well you don't learn, you don't as a gallery to know what might be the issue, what you might do better.

AC You know and some galleries have been rejected and we had a gallery one year who was here three of four years in a row and he sent in a horrible proposal and I rejected it and he said well I have done this fair for three of four year and I said go read the application you didn't do what we asked you to do and that's why you were rejected so if you send a list of 10 gallery artists and no proposal for your booth you are

automatically rejected and that happens to quite a few galleries event at Volta they just do the usual thing and I feel just like if you really can't , I know doing applications is a pain, but if you don't really sit down and read it and make the effort to actually do what it says the I am like no o.k.

PB And without that you can't do your job of trying to make it into a fair with some sense of harmony

AC and usually one person writes to me sometime and said did you even look at it? Or did it go straight into the trash? and I said you know I understand how you feel, so I am not going to take offence at that but - you understand how offensive that is to me, because you are saying I am not doing my job - yes of course I look at every application and I read it and I go to the website and we have the curatorial meeting and we beam the pictures up you know, of course I do that I'm sorry if it feels as though we didn't but we did and like I said I try to give as much feedback as I can and there was a gallery this year that didn't get in who was in last year and he scraped in last year but he's not a bad gallery and he applied with first of all too many artists wasn't that many but was like 5 and that's the other thing in a small booth, if someone applies with four like Charlie Smith and he has got 6 in a big booth, but if someone applies with a list of 6 artists and they have applied for a small booth I am automatically thinking what's that going to look like. And so if they are a good gallery, they might go on the waiting list and I might give them a call, and say well – were you going to do three rotating solo shows? But again it is about the thought process so I do expect the galleries to think about it and if I don't feel that the thought process has gone into the application then it's not my job to call them and ask them to do it again. Do you know what I mean?, it's like you got homework, but I knew the guy was going to be very upset so I wrote him a long email and I said ,so listen you were on the waiting list but nothing ever came free this year and I said one of the reasons was one of the artists, and this is something else that we do which I consider curating the fair it's not so much curating the booth but what I find, I know that it is just part of the market and this just happens, but when I see a statements with a gallery that has not represented that artist very long and I know there is another gallery that has represented that artist, I think that is bad curating from a fair standpoint, because at a fair you are supposed to be supporting the galleries it's not just about the artists and who is hip. If there is another gallery and I have seen that happen so many times and I think that is kind of sloppy curating on the part of the fair. If I see a statement and I saw that artist three of four times with another gallery at another fair, and they are being represented by someone else I think that is crappy - so we try to really look at artists c.v.'s and things like that and one the artist this gallery was bringing was supported for years by another gallery who is with us this year and she had already applied with him too. So that was one reason and the other artist there was another problem with that artist and so I wrote to him and he was like, 'that helped me so much because I didn't realise' and I said well you know in a fair this small I don't want a person going to a fair and seeing five by the same artist. You get to the 20th booth and you like there is another Gerhard Richter or whatever, so you know especially in a small fair that it is supposed to be about discovering, you really want each to have its own things, so if I then see two galleries I really know I want and they are both coming with the same artists I will call them both and say

listen, can you guys work it out that one of you does it? Or are you bringing different bodies of work? So we really make that effort that there isn't the same photograph because that happens. So I think that can be very helpful so the dealer wrote me back and said 'that makes it all so much better because now I really understand for next year and you know I will think about it'. So I think when you talk about curating a fair I think there are other things that need to be curated besides from just the art, or the booths, it is also about again you have got to look at the big picture and how the booth are going to work and you know sometimes it is just like oh my god there is just too much video this year let's get rid of that one and get a bit more painting this year and you try to do that too.

PB So how do you think the future of the art fair will evolve?

AC It is a really hard question because again how to make it evolve and what Art Basel does with these new sections is really interesting but then the fair keeps just gets bigger and bigger, and so first I think it just has to be less fairs – but we think about what we do, thinking about how to open it up would be one way, and one year I tried to get bunch of lower east side galleries that were interested but they were like 'Basel is too expensive' - what if you just take a really giant booth for 5 of you, do it together ? so it's difficult we think about ways to try and change the format and it is a certain format because it works to a certain degree

PB As I have been looking at how these hybrid models have been developing, they have also now been retracting a little bit

AC And generally they always do because the dealers ask for this and that because you know, we also started out with all of these ideals about what we wanted it to do, but you talked about how some of the fairs want to escape the market and like not to mention names, but all of their press releases they always say they always don't say anything about being a fair and I just think it is so disingenuous - it's like we all know you are an art fair, don't be embarrassed about it. Why should we feel embarrassed about that we are here to meet clients and to sell work? I don't see the shame in that. One question I have often got, back when more art fairs were opening, people were - do we need any more art fairs? - Well would you ask the question do we need any more artists? because ultimately that is what it is - more artists coming out of art schools, more people are interested in art - more galleries are opening and that's why there are more art fairs because if there were as only as many galleries as could fill Art Basel, there wouldn't be Liste or Volta, but it is basically the dynamic of the art world having now expanded. We have galleries now in India and China and it is expanding - more people are interested. In the U.K., they might not be all going out and buying art, but a lot of people now know what the Turner Prize is or who Tracey Emin is. 20 years ago they wouldn't, but it has become something that is part of a general dialogue.

PB Thank you that's been very helpful

AC My pleasure

ENDS

APPENDIX 4.ii. CASE STUDY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: Darren Flook, co-director Independent, New York
Interview Method: Telephone Interview 30th May 2012
Transcribed from audio recording by Paulette Brien

PB Can you elaborate on the background about the setting up of Independent and expand on the 'hybrid model', why you decided to take that approach and how it actually in reality manifests itself.

DF I love New York, it is an amazing city and I thought it was a shame that it didn't have a great art-fair for non-American galleries. The ADAA was very much what it is. The Armory wasn't the same art-fair that it was, it had become a very different thing. It was very successful, but it had become a very commercially driven thing. It felt that there was space to do something different. I was on the committee for Artissima and I was chatting with Elizabeth about wanting to do something in New York. My initial idea was to do something tiny. Suddenly there were beginning to be empty spaces in Chelsea something that hadn't happened for a while. It was going to be something small just something like 4 galleries together in a space that had been a gallery. Then the x initiative (Dia Centre) was coming to an end in the Dia building in Feb and if we could do something in March we could do that without having to rehire etc. Basically we wrote down a list of everything we didn't like about art-fairs and we wanted to build something around what we did like. The art-fair model hadn't really been questioned at all. The art-fair model works brilliantly in a boom. If you are doing lots of shopping then a shopping mall works is the place to be, but if you are not doing any shopping then there is something a bit depressing about shopping malls. Because the market was slower we felt that we can rethink things a bit. We don't have to do things just because everyone else has chosen. The design and the physical and ideological manifestation came out of well let's think about it from the ground up. Let's not have a traditional art-fair book they are pointless. They are a hangover from the pre-google age. No one looks at an art-fair book to see who represents an artist anymore, you google it. No one uses looks at an art-fair book to look up someone's fax number, you google it. We don't need to employ 3 people to work on an art-fair book its unnecessary so get rid of it. You don't need a VIP programme or VIP rooms if you are in slap bang middle of Chelsea. So it was about getting rid of all the fat on something and completely stripping it back to make it as easy and as cheap as possible for the galleries. People don't have a good time when they have a massive bill they have to pay ticking over their heads. We want to do something where the galleries would actually enjoy it. It should be fun to take part in as fun to visit so the design aspects came out of that. Let's keep all the windows open, for natural light, let's not put people in booths. Once you start to take it all apart you realise there is so much there because the last person did it.

PB One of the things you talk about is a custom made approach – do galleries come to you with what they want to show and they you build around it.

DF We can try to work out to the best of our abilities what people are going to show - are they going to show sculpture? Wall based work? film so that we can keep the building as natural as possible. The Dia building is an amazing building but you've got to let it do its job. It likes art and art likes it. It doesn't if you chop it all up. To be able to do that that you need to know a little bit about what people are thinking about, I am going to show mainly sculpture, o.k. so can we put you in the space in-front of the window which doesn't have much wall. That's perfect My Ricky Swallow installation will look brilliant with light pouring in through the windows and I don't need any wall.

PB You don't tend to know specifically what people are showing.

DF Sometimes we know specifically, but sometimes the galleries don't know what they will show. Well they are working on something in the studio and we think it is going to look something like this you try to work around things but it is not curated.

PB That was my next question - Do you consider it to be curated?

DF No, it isn't curated, I consider it to be sensitive rather than specifically curated. It's like trying to get it to feel the best for everyone. The traditional art-fair booth is the way that it is because it is amazingly flexible, 3 walls, a floor and some lights and you can turn that into whatever you want to turn it into. Well o.k. if we can respond a little bit and be a little bit sensitive to what people are showing then maybe we can allow the building to be more like itself.

PB And in doing that do you think that you are allowing the work to be more like itself. Whether or not this hybrid approach to creating a more exhibition like format is being driven by an idea that's trying contextualise the work more like it would be in a gallery and whether people understand it more as art than as a commodity. ?

DF Independent is made by art dealers for art dealers. We are gallerists making something for gallerists and therefore artists and collectors come. What is the hierarchy? For us the art is the top of the triangle, the people who bring that and show it are directly under that and the artists that make it. It's not about creating the perfect situation for a collector to come to and see as much art as possible it's about creating something that galleries like to do and artists want to make work for and where the work stands a chance of looking the best it can. The walls we make are 2 feet thick plaster walls. They are museum style walls. They aren't fake walls. Stuff looks crap on a flimsy wall with a bit of tape running down the middle of it. I think if something has invested time and effort in making something and someone else has invested time and money in shipping it then the work should be treated with respect. This is how

gallerists express respect. It's why even the poorest galleries spend ages getting their space exactly as they want it to be, because they like the stuff they are showing.

PB So do you consider that this approach makes it a much better art-viewing experience?

DF The best viewing experience is normally the gallery and you are trying to get as close as that. Some things look amazing in art-fairs, I am the first to admit that when you go downstairs at Art Basel and see a Picasso on the wall at a French gallery that has been around for 20 years and it looks amazing and they have spent a lot of money and effort to make it look good. At Independent we are trying to do the same thing but with contemporary work, trying to show it in as close to its gallery setting as possible. It's your aim, but whether it is achievable or not is another thing obviously in a gallery you would never have a completely random gallery opposite facing you that might decide to bring a huge neon flashing thing. The other thing about Independent is that it is really really small, you can do stuff in a really small thing that you could never do like Frieze is a 180 galleries or something you can't do this on a big scale and you can only do it if it is small and therefore you can edit it. So one thing is you can't apply to Independent. We pick people. We are picking people based on our fandom of their programme, and also trying to create a little vibe, like a dinner party, that might be a really interesting conversation, that gallery from Cologne that do the best outsider art in Europe directly opposite Sprüth Magers is an interesting conversation. That gallery that shows Japanese conceptual photography from the 70's putting that close to Herald Street, that's what you are trying to do

PB I knew it was invitation only but it is interesting to hear you elaborate on that this because you are looking at what the galleries are about in a sense as much as they art they might bring you are looking at their ethos.

DF You are looking for...the problem with it being so small to tell you the truth because you need to keep it fresh for the visitors you need to rotate out galleries that are brilliant that you love. Because we can only have 40 galleries, you can't make the building bigger that's it and it has to keep fresh. The other thing about inviting people is that art-fair applications are a pain in the arse, a pain in the arse to read and a pain in the arse to make and let's be honest if you sat down with a friend in a pub with a piece of paper in a pub and you had to write down 40 galleries that you loved you could do it. You don't need to wade through 500 applications to find the 40 galleries you know who they are, and you know who they are with a little bit of outside advice like a friend who is a curator saying there is a really brilliant gallery in Mexico or Dubai you should look at their programme.

PB So you would use the advocacy of other people to inform your decisions.

DF Yes we are all ears.

PB One of things I am writing about what is wrong with the traditional art-fair model.

DF The problem they are too big, normally in parts of a city you would never want to go to normally, often in cities you normally wouldn't want to go to. There is no daylight you are sat in crappy lighting conditions for 8 hours a day with walls you would never accept in your home or in your gallery and because they are so big you are often surrounded by galleries you don't like. Gallerists are human beings, put them next to a window and next to a gallery that they like, make a building in a place that they might want to go to anyplace, give them a decent cup of coffee and half edible sandwich and they will probably enjoy it. The amazing thing with Independent is that the galleries are happy. What makes them happy is them just being allowed to do their job. They are good at hanging shows, they are good at talking about art work they know their artists they've hung the work before they know how to do it. If you put them in a building in a nice place with other people they like then they are happy bunnies.

PB Whether or not you think that this emergence or critique of the model is about trying to create an environment which is more economically successful?

DF It's also about not spending. If you take part in an art-fair that costs you £25000 to take part in that means you have got to sell £60000 to break even. If you are in the middle of a boom and everything is going swimmingly then that's a very doable thing but if you are a young to middle sized gallery that is selling work at £5000 to make £60000 that's a lot of sales. Once the market slowed down, it was no longer a guarantee that you were going to do that. This is suddenly a question mark – are we going to break even at all, are we just going to lose money, if so how much money are we going to lose. If by getting rid of the extraneous stuff you can make it as cheap as possible then. In the first year we did it, we published the accounts because I wanted everyone who took part to know what we had spent their money on, the walls cost this, the security cost this this is what everything went on because I understood it was a huge act of trust from my colleagues. I had never run an art-fair I am not sure I would give me money and will there be an art-fair when they turned up, before there was no history there, neither had Elizabeth, so we published the accounts so everyone could see where every \$ was spent. So in the first year we managed to get it under \$10000 for a stand, so it meant if you are selling a £5000 painting then you only have to sell two. It makes you enjoy your week a lot more because you feel you can go and do some studio visits, I can go and look at a show, because I don't have to be there 8 hours a day looking like stress and sending off weird vibes just because I need to make x amount of money just to pay for this thing.

PB When you were thinking about it with Elizabeth was the idea to make the art look less like a commodity ever part of it?

DF It wasn't ever a discussion that we had. Once you put art in an art-fair it is a commodity. What a commodity looks like is – a commodity doesn't have a shape or colour it is an abstracted word and once something is a commodity it is a commodity that looks different in different situations. Does it look any less like a commodity than in a museum, I'm not sure.

PB I'm just exploring whether behind some of the open-space model, this revisiting of the model whether any of it is about trying to make the art look more like art and the economy is denied.

DF It's not denied, people at Independent really want to sell what they have brought. The artists really want you to sell what they have bought. You want people to realise that this is stuff for sale. It was the second year that people started to sell. In the first year, people walked into the space, this looks good and people walked out. No come back it's for sale.

PB You didn't do anything within the infrastructure to signal that – you didn't put up price lists or anything?

DF No we didn't, it was word of mouth and also you have a room full of gallerists telling people that things are for sale, so let them just do their job. I think part of it also is that doesn't work every time. I think Independent works because of where it is it is slap bang in the middle of Chelsea, it is in the city with more art collectors than anywhere else in the world in a part of the city where there are more galleries than anywhere else in the world. In other places you might have to signal that this is an art-fair and please come along and buy stuff in a more flag waving sort of way in that city on that street, people are aware of what you are.

ENDS

APPENDIX 4.iii: CASE STUDY INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewee: Rebecca May Marston, Director of Limoncello / one of the galleries that formed the steering committee for Sunday (from 2010 – 2012). Rebecca spoke to me in a person capacity and wants it to be noted that these are her opinions and not that of the entire Sunday steering group.

Interview Method: Telephone Interview : 11th July 2012
Transcribed from audio recording by Paulette Brien

PB The first question is to get a bit of background to the setting up Sunday, how it came about and why it came about?

RMM The very first one was in Berlin and I was nothing to do with setting that up they did that. It was part of Gallery Weekend in Berlin, and by them I mean the other two organisers Croy Nielsen and Tulips & Roses. At Gallery Weekend the galleries had to pay like 5000 Euros to be part of it, just to be on a map and be part of dinner which is extortionate. I don't really know what it is but you get on a map and you are part of a dinner which collectors go to. So the young galleries set up Sunday or Henrikke Nielsen did and only charged 500 Euros and found a building and then invited some non-Berliners as well. And we did that and at the time I think that it was apparent, Zoo was closing – or no not quite that, I think we had all just heard that we hadn't got into Frieze Frame again for the 2nd year and at the same time the demise of Zoo it became apparent and so there was a gap to fill and it was you know a necessity, because we have to do a fair because that is where we make the money and so I joined and we set about organising it in London and one of my clients actually recommended Ambika P3 space which is so close to Frieze and is really great, it is an amazing space and that is how that happened and now we are going into our 3rd year there.

PB So how much did it differ in terms of how it was presented from Berlin? Did you take part in it in Berlin?

RMM Yes, yes we did, it was in a brand new building that hadn't yet been inhabited there so it was a different sort of space, there were smaller rooms and stuff, but it was the same kind of feel, Motto was the bookstore there and there was a little VIP champagne thing afterwards – but a similar kind of feel, same sort of galleries, same kind of vibe – but then in London it was much more open, much more 'boothless', because it was in, I can't remember if it was an office building or a domestic building that we did it in Berlin, or that I participated in Berlin rather, but it was 'boothless' in London, but similar, I mean same sort of aim, same relaxed attitude.

PB With the open space approach – because I have got here from your website, 'no booths or divisions', can you expand a little bit on why that approach was taken specifically and how it manifests itself in reality.

RMM One it is cheaper, if you don't get crews in to build walls it is cheaper and we

wanted to make it as cheap as possible for the galleries, because even in the young sections of the big art- fairs the minimum you are paying something I don't know something like £7000 or something mental like that, whereas in our first year, what did we charge? £1500 or £1000, I think it was £1000, I can't remember to be honest, but something like that, so one it is cheaper, two the space sort of allows for it, three it is only 20 galleries so it is small and contained and I don't want to say get away with it because that makes it sounds like we are excusing ourselves, but in essence, yes, with only 20 galleries you can just about manage it, but if it was a huge fair, like Basel or something, you could never get away without the booths it would be mental, and also, you know people have to adapt their presentations without as much wall space as you would normally get with an art-fair booth and practically, well, yes, it is fine, people do have to each curate their own booths a little differently, but certainly from our first to our second year we made the booths divisions a bit more clear and we introduced really simple small things like better signage for each booth and we also asked for solo or two person presentations, to make each presentation a little tighter and the board as a whole had a little bit more curatorial control over the fair. People had submit presentations, and we did look at them and we did want to curate it as a fair because in the first year it was a little bit messy so, we felt anyway.

PB So in the second year you asked people to tell you in advance what they were going to present and then you selected on that basis?

RMM No we still invited the galleries, but we asked for proposals for a single or two person presentation and we tried to place it well so that it would be a nice fair, a nice sort of coherent experience as a fair as a whole.

PB So that was one of things I was going to ask, what do you consider to be the benefits of the open space approach from your point of view and I guess that is one of the things isn't it - that you are better able to create each individual presentations would you think of it as a mini exhibition?

RMM Well, I don't know, mainly it is cheaper for people to participate and to be honest that's my bottom line and I can't speak on behalf of the whole board, but if it makes it cheaper I am game, the other thing is that it's just a different fair experience if it is that open and if you take the landscape as a whole year, it is nice to see the different approaches it is good that there is variation between booths and no booths and interesting buildings and tents.

PB And so for you it is part of that, making it different, distinguishing it from other things and creating some sense of something new I suppose with that?

RMM Yes, I think so, but primarily it has to come back to this thing of making it being cheaper as well because I think a lot of galleries if they had a choice they would have a bit more wall space because it is easier and also it is quite a lot you definitely run the risk of it turning into an MA show if you do it like that.

PB So how do you choose galleries to be part of it, and I suppose I am asking this question because it is around the idea of the curator and the idea of whether there is curatorial engagement in your selection I suppose.

RMM The Board invites 17 other galleries and we have changed our PR tack this year, and we have been asked these questions - but we haven't come up with answers which we are all agreed on yet, so I am saying this from a fairly personal point of view, I can't really speak on behalf of the board or I would have to check it with them to be honest. I think I would say there is a core to Sunday it feels like there has been a core consistently from Berlin all the way through and that includes Tanya Leighton and Luttgenmeijer for example, which are both Berlin galleries of course, and I would say that we are trying to make it a good fair, we are doing our research into galleries and trying to make it an interesting selection but at the same time, with only 20 galleries, it is really small, it is a really small number and so it is really really tough for it to be a peer-led selection.

PB So you do take recommendations from each other in terms of the Board and the Board invites a group of people that you all feel some connection with and that you all feel that they all feel right

RMM Yes definitively that they all feel right for Sunday and we are trying to balance it in certain ways, a little bit geographically a little bit erm...we always have in the back of our mind super fresh galleries that is interesting to present for people to look at and it is interesting in terms of really young galleries to give them the opportunity to get their foot in the door with fairs and stuff, because it is so cheap to make it viable for them, but to be honest this is the thing that Sunday is least clear about, because it is not an institution for us it might pop up again somewhere else, we are considering other places, but we don't want it to become an institution so it has always been we have never had to have these staunch diplomatic answers behind it that other fairs have to. We try to do our best and we have tried but I wouldn't say be fair because you can't be fair, but to make it a really good fair really.

PB Do you consider Sunday to be a curated fair; is there any involvement by Sunday's organisers in the choice of which artists and which artworks are shown by each gallery?

RMM I would like to say yes, and I think that that is what is what we are aiming for, but another one of the great problems of it being peer-led is that it is very difficult for our peers to submit something to us as a Board and have it be rejected, so in all honestly that hasn't worked when that has happened, but this year we have employed a director who is curating it to that extent to make sure this year it will be more curated because she is going to have much more oversight, well that's the plan anyway, she is talking to galleries much more about the artists that they are recommending and we are looking more closely as a Board, but we want it be the best thing for the galleries as well if they want to present someone, it is usually for a reason we want it to be a coherent fair as a whole as coherent meaning well curated I suppose, but it has to be

good for the galleries too, but we don't want it to be if you have seen one artist in a billion fairs this year just because they are doing well commercially, that is the sort of thing we are trying to avoid.

PB Do you consider that your open space approach, and answer for yourself really but in the context of other things that I am aware such as Independent and other fairs which are looking at taking down the walls and trying to create more of a sense of a cohesive space that looks like one thing perhaps as well as individual things – do you consider that that is partly led by any desire to create a more effective sales environment, do you think for example in doing that, the work itself is better able to be seen as it might be in a museum or in a gallery – so it is presented more as art and therefore do you consider that they may be more effective as a sales tool – or does that not come as part of the thinking ?

RMM I suppose when you go to fair after fair after fair and you see white cube booths, I don't mean White Cube, I mean cubic white booth after a cubic white booth and there often is a style of commercial presentation at an art-fair I think, I don't know, I think it is a little bit to do with expectation, I never really mind it, I never really mind, foraging through an overcrowded, just very personally through a really overcrowded booth to find something that I really like and think collectors probably don't. Some of them don't mind that and you know at the end of the day art-fairs are about the clients, mainly about the collectors – I don't think it is more museum-like–well, maybe the other board members would like to claim that for Sunday, but I certainly wouldn't, I would definitely not ally it with that I would be much more humble and say it was probably much more like a degree show, not that I think the art is anything like that, but erm it is quite, I think it is quite a chaotic, or I think it can be yes, no to be honest I think it can be quite a chaotic viewing experience, but no more so than row after row of white booths either, I don't think either is a particularly ideal way to view art but then I think if you are going to an art-fair you are going with a certain mind set about foraging out and finding out stuff and so I don't think that you are particularly looking at how you view things, you know the ideal viewing conditions, because you are just not really going to find them unless you have brave galleries showing one work on their booths to be honest.

PB As a supplement to 'do you think it is a more effective sales environment?' 'do you consider that the open space model is trying to in some sense replicate the conditions of gallery?', whether or not part of the thinking of setting up Sunday or Independent has been about trying to create an environment that replicates the conditions of the museum and therefore is it a better art viewing experience? But you have just said art-fairs are art-fairs in a sense and they have a particular rationale and they are about selling work and if you go to them you go partly to look but also to buy.

RMM Or not even just selling but they are about presenting work in a certain way and that's what people expect – I think we are thinking about Sunday a little bit differently, in that we are really thinking about art-fairs and what that means for galleries and especially young galleries and we were partly trying to make a point about how cheap

it was you know about the finances behind it rather than thinking about, trying to come up with a new way of doing art-fairs or the ideal conditions or anything it was more about the galleries and the galleries standing together because they hadn't got into Frieze and Zoo had been killed off and you know or in Berlin the galleries couldn't afford and if these things want the younger galleries who are the ones presenting often edgier work let's say or taking more risks, then they have to make it more affordable and really that was our proper motivation rather than getting into behind the idea of an art-fair, I think probably Independent did that much more and really conceived their presentation modes, that was probably much more of their thinking than it was Sunday's.

PB One of the things that I asked Darren was do you custom make the presentation around what works have been selected – so is there kind of a curatorial consideration in relation to where one stand is or where another stand is or what the work might look like next to each other.

RMM Yes, yes definitely try to do that, we learnt from experience second time and this time again we are certainly doing that but then also geographically, you don't want to put all of the London galleries in a row it's daft if it is a fair in London, you want to separate them out and put them next to American ones so that they both benefit from each other – so those kinds of things, but yes, we definitely strove to do that in the second edition and this one as well.

PB And a final question it isn't on the list but I will just ask you if that's alright – it is about anecdotal evidence from collectors as to how they perceive, how they use, how they consider the open space model – is it generally well received?

RMM Well, a lot of people did come in and say God it is so nice to come in here after being in the big tent because it is so different and it is so open and so nice, but then equally one of my clients, our biggest client said to us that they found it really confusing and there wasn't enough information and the signage wasn't good enough and we changed all those things, we put a grey plinth at the corner of each one we asked everyone to write a press release with information on the artists that they were showing, the artist or the artists they were showing and we got better signage and things try and make it a little bit clearer and I think that was really good.

PB I think that was really effective, it was enough, it didn't get in the way aesthetically or visually, it made a clear separation,

RMM Well you know a grey plinth with a name and an A4 sheet of paper on top is very standard institutional paraphernalia sort of thing so we tried to make it blend in without it obtruding on the galleries presentations but at the same time making it clear enough for collectors to be able to work out the definitions without having those booth partitions.

PB O.k. I will leave it at that, thank you so much

RMM Ok if you want to know anymore ask me, also I need to ask you to make it clear that a lot of the time it is me speaking rather than a spokesperson for Sunday – I am a spokesperson – but if you want it to be officially coming from Sunday then I have to put everything past the board and they would have to edit it.

PB What I will do it is write up what I have got and then I will send it to you and you can either make that distinction yourself and you can annotate it so that you can make sure that it is the voice of you where you want it to be the voice of you and where the bits are that you have represented the board you can just leave it as that.

ENDS

APPENDIX 4.iv : CASE STUDY INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewee: Karl England : Co-founder of Sluice

Method: Email questionnaire

PB Can you explain a little about the background to setting up Sluice art fair.

KE Sluice came into being because we had access to a large venue over Frieze weekend in the middle of London. I'd previously curated shows in the space and struggled to excite anyone's interest. It struck me that the artist-run grass roots sector is completely excluded from the art world extravaganza as exemplified by the art fair circus. It occurred to us that if we could create a fair that was financially accessible to artist-run projects then we could benefit from the positives that fairs possess – such as their ability to generate press and footfall, whilst creating a platform for art practice that is not necessarily art fair friendly.

PB The introduction to the 2011 Sluice catalogue says, 'Sluice isn't a critique, or a parody or a survey: it's a modest proposal' – can you expand on this,

KE I think the first Sluice in 2011 was a tentative experiment, and as we've grown we've become more clear about what we want to achieve. We've always been clear with ourselves that we are occupying the form of the art fair but are not beholden to the art fair model in its current state. Art fairs are not very good at engaging critical debate, I think this is because art-as-commerce reigns in the current model. If you can create an environment where every move is not a reaction to a financial imperative then you might see some art that is more experimental in nature.

PB Rather than a series of similar sized white walled booths, Sluice took an open space approach to the spaces that galleries occupied. Can you explain little about why this approach was taken?

KE Four reasons. First: Walls are expensive, by not installing walls we can pass that saving on to the galleries. Second: It's symbolic of the open exchange of ideas and networks that artist-run spaces operate with. Third: Sluice is an artist/curator run project in its own right, rather than a corporate entity profiting from the creative sector Sluice is what it shows, as such we've always been interested in the idea of Sluice as exhibition, or Sluice as artist, in this scenario why would we have walls. Fourth: We want to get away from the idea of art fairs as trade fairs, getting rid of the booths is a short hand way of visually doing this.

PB Do you consider Sluice art fair to be a curated? If so, how does this curatorial role manifest itself?

KE On an organisational level it is curated, we curate the galleries, the galleries curate their artists. Every gallery submits a curatorial idea and it is on the strength of this submission that we accept the galleries into Sluice. The fair is not thematic, as we don't think we should impose a narrative on the participants. But I think a narrative (or a number of narratives) tend to emerge of their own accord, and we then build our talks and educational programme around this.

PB How do you choose galleries to take part in Sluice art fair?

KE See above. Also, we try not to be too dictatorial about what is admissible, we feature predominantly artist-run but also curator run, and some emerging galleries and projects too. I think the over-riding factor is a certain DIY sensibility. But we don't want to create a ghetto where we can be easily pigeon-holed as the art fair for artist-run galleries, we'd rather be defined as the fair where interesting things are allowed to happen – and our job is to create the environment that will attract these things and to allow them to flourish.

PB Do you have any involvement in the selection of which artists and which artworks galleries show?

KE Only in-so-far as the galleries have to submit a curatorial proposal to be considered for entry.

PB Do you consider that the 'open space' approach to presentation provides a better 'art viewing' experience? If so, why? - Is this part of the consideration of Sluice?

KE I think it creates a problematic viewing experience, which I think is a positive thing. Without walls one gallery pitch bleeds into another, there is a potential for a lot of visual noise, where one art work is forced into a dialogue with another artwork, often incongruously. If the galleries want to show their artists in glorious isolation they can stay in their galleries. The galleries are always informed of who their direct neighbours will be and are encouraged to communicate with each other in advance of the fair. Sluice is a collaboration, on an organisational, gallery, artist and artwork level. How conscious of this some of the participants are is irrelevant.

PB Do you consider that the 'open space' approach to presentation provides a more effective sales environment? If so, why? - Is this part of the consideration of Sluice?

KE I have no idea. We're not against sales, and we are developing this aspect of the fair. But we strenuously tell galleries before they apply that they shouldn't participate in Sluice if they're looking for a direct route to the market. There are fairs out there that cater for entry level galleries looking to sell art. When galleries choose to participate in Sluice and when they select the artists they want to show and when they select the art they want to show - the last thing we want them to be thinking of is the

cost/profit matrix. We want to show the most interesting art not the most bankable. Sometimes they're the same thing, but certainly not always.

PB From your website it suggests that Sluice is now evolving into other areas of activity away from the art fair model – can you talk a little about this.

KE 1/ Well, we're an artist/curator run project, so from that perspective we're free to develop in ways that we find interesting.

2/ We're not profitable, we're not predicated on becoming profitable (sustainable would be nice), staging the fair doesn't earn us anything, so from that perspective there's no financial imperative to stage the fair every year – which is one of the reasons we went biennial.

3/ We still - haven't received any funding. So from an accountability perspective the only people we're accountable to are the participating galleries.

We're always keen to use our collectivist approach to adopt platforms that allows us to do things we couldn't do individually. So for instance this year we're organising (with the Bushwick Gallery Association) an expo in New York, we're taking thirty international artist-run galleries over with us to be hosted by twenty Brooklyn based artist-run galleries. Next year – 2015 – the fair will return, in between we're planning on staging a few exhibitions, talks etc. but in terms of concentrating the collective minds of galleries, artists, critics, the public there's nothing like an art fair.

PB How do you consider the art fair model will evolve?

KE The top end will continue to be in awe of big money, the middle and lower end will continue to be in awe of the top end. The top end will continue to fret over its increasing lack of critical engagement, and will continue to co-opt the critically engaged non-commercial in order to shore-up its critical validity. The critically engaged non-commercial will continue to allow itself to be usurped in return for a place (no matter how temporally) at the big table.

ENDS